

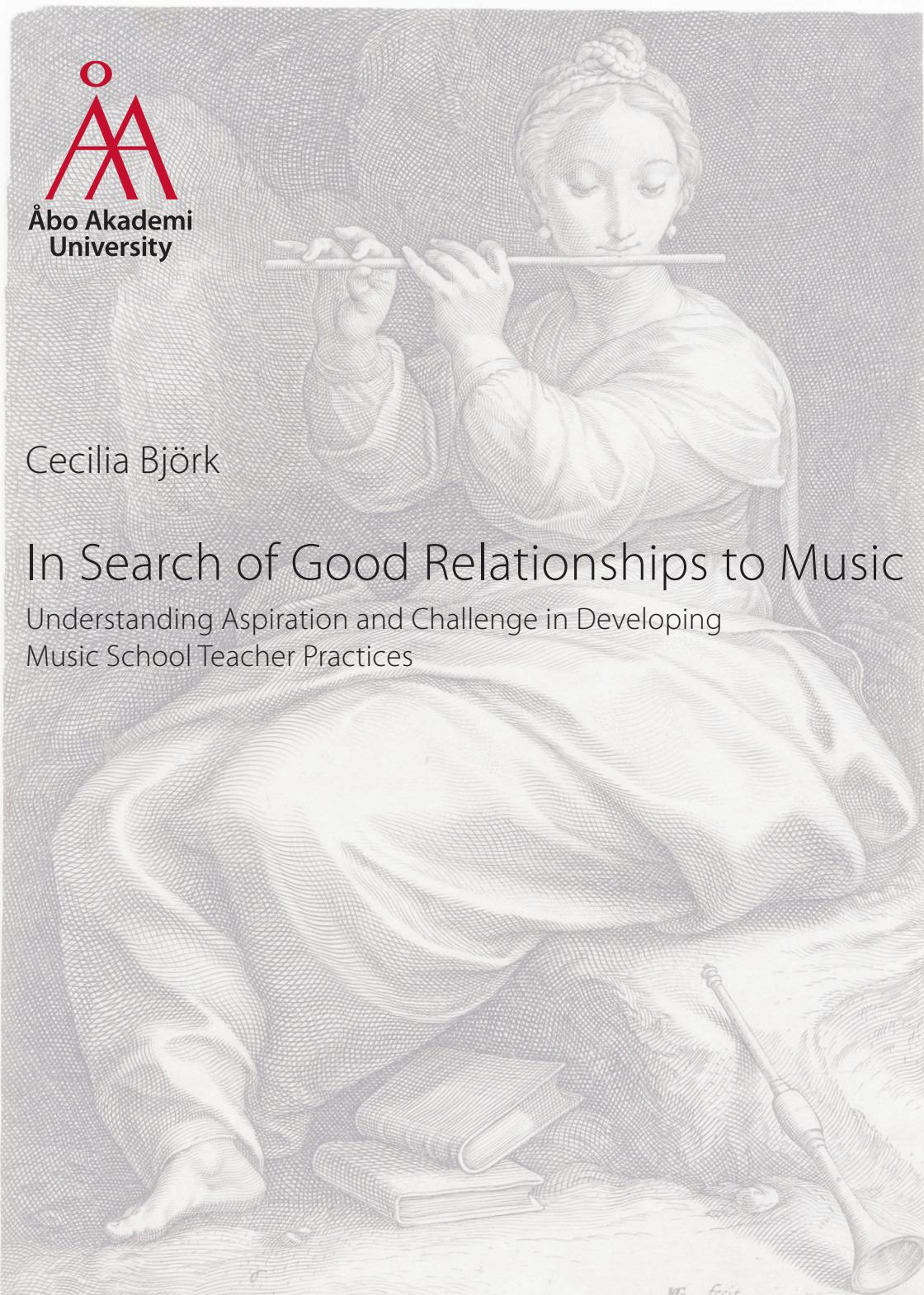


Åbo Akademi
University

Cecilia Björk

In Search of Good Relationships to Music

Understanding Aspiration and Challenge in Developing
Music School Teacher Practices



*Et terpen calami, et gemialis Tibia honestat,
Et quo cantari consuerunt Pythia versu;* *M. fecit.*
*Fila Aganippeos colles, saltusq; peragrat,
Concentu dulcis, doctosq; Mathemate clar*



Cecilia Björk

Cecilia Björk is a University Teacher of Music Education at Åbo Akademi, Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies (2010–). She holds a Master of Music degree from the Sibelius Academy with specialisations in piano teaching and general music education. Her publications have focused on reflective music teaching, practical consequences of different presuppositions about musical learning, and the role of student voice in teaching and learning music. Her research interests include the philosophy of music education, policy issues in education, and ethics in interpretive research. She is also a registered psychotherapist who has specialised in reflecting processes and intergenerational dialogue.

Cover image: Hendrik Goltzius (1558–1617), *Euterpen calami, et genialis Tibia honestat* [Euterpe the genial reeds and flute honor], 1592.
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Abstract

This study focuses on teacher practices in publicly funded music schools in Finland. As views on the aims of music education change and broaden, music schools across Europe share the challenge of developing their activities in response. In public and scholarly debate, there have been calls for increased diversity of contents and concepts of teaching. In Finland, the official national curriculum for state-funded music schools builds on the ideal that teaching and learning should create conditions which promote ‘a good relationship to music’. The meaning of this concept has been deliberately left open in order to leave room for dialogue, flexibility, and teacher autonomy. Since what is meant by ‘good’ is not defined in advance, the notion of ‘improving’ practices is also open to discussion. The purpose of the study is to examine these issues from teachers’ point of view by asking what music school teachers aim to accomplish as they develop their practices.

Methodologically, the study introduces a suggestion for building empirical research on Alpers’s ‘robust’ praxial approach to music education, a philosophical theory which is strongly committed to practitioner perspectives and musical diversity. A systematic method for analysing music education practices, *interpretive practice analysis*, is elaborated with support from interpretive research methods originally used in policy analysis. In addition, the research design shows how reflecting conversations (a collaborative approach well-known in Nordic social work) can be fruitfully applied in interpretive research and combined with teacher inquiry. Data have been generated in a collaborative project involving five experienced music school teachers and the researcher. The empirical material includes transcripts from group conversations, data from teacher inquiry conducted within the project, and transcripts from follow-up interviews.

The teachers’ aspirations can be understood as strivings to reinforce the connection between musical practices and various forms of human flourishing such that music and flourishing can sustain each other. Examples from their practices show how the word ‘good’ receives its meaning in context. Central among the teachers’ concerns is their hope that students develop a free and sustainable interest in music, often described as *inspiration*. I propose that ‘good relationships to music’ and ‘inspiration’ can be understood as philosophical mediators which support the transition from an indeterminate ‘interest in music’ towards specific ways in which music can become a (co-)constitutive part of living well in each person’s particular circumstances.

Different musical practices emphasise different aspects of what is considered important in music and in human life. Music school teachers consciously balance between a variety of such values. They also make efforts to resist pressure which might threaten the goods they think are most important. Such

goods include joy, participation, perseverance, solid musical skills related to specific practices, and a strong sense of vitality. The insights from this study suggest that when teachers are able to create inspiration, they seem to do so by performing complex work which combines musical and educational aims and makes general positive contributions to their students' lives. Ensuring that teaching and learning in music schools remain as constructive and meaningful as possible for both students and teachers is a demanding task. The study indicates that collaborative, reflective and interdisciplinary work may be helpful as support for development processes on both individual and collective levels of music school teacher practices.

Keywords: music education, music schools, philosophy of music education, teacher practices, collaborative research, teacher inquiry

Abstrakt

Den här studien fokuserar på lärarpraktiker i offentligt finansierade musikskolor i Finland. I takt med att synen på vad som är eftersträvansvärt i musikpedagogik förändras och breddas, skapar de nya perspektiven utmaningar för motsvarande skolor i hela Europa. Krav på att utveckla musikskolornas aktiviteter och göra dem mera mångsidiga har framförts i såväl offentlig som akademisk debatt.

Nationella läroplansgrunder för musikskolor i Finland bygger på idealet att undervisning och lärande ska skapa förutsättningar för ”ett gott förhållande till musiken”. Vad denna formulering ska betyda har medvetet lämnats öppet i avsikt att skapa utrymme för dialog, flexibilitet och lärarautonomi. Eftersom man inte definierar på förhand vad som menas med ”gott”, är frågan om hur lärarpraktiker ska ”förbättras” också öppen för diskussion. Syftet med studien är att undersöka dessa teman ur lärares synvinkel genom att fråga vad musikskollärare strävar efter i sitt arbete med att utveckla undervisningspraktiken.

Avhandlingen introducerar en tolkande forskningsmetod som bygger på Alpersons ”robusta” praxialism, en filosofisk teori där uppmärksamheten riktas särskilt mot praktikerperspektiv och musikalisk mångfald. En systematisk metod för att analysera musikpedagogiska praktiker, *tolkande praktikanalys*, utvecklas med stöd av tolkande metoder som ursprungligen har använts i policyanalys. Forskningsdesignen visar även hur reflekterande samtal (en kollaborativ arbetsform som är välbekant i socialt arbete i Norden) på ett fruktbart sätt kan tillämpas i tolkande studier och kombineras med lärarforskning. Data har genererats i ett kollaborativt projekt där fem erfarna musikskollärare och forskaren deltog. Det empiriska materialet omfattar transkriptioner från gruppsamtal, data från lärarforskningsprojekt och transkriptioner från uppföljande intervjuer.

Lärarnas målsättningar kan tolkas som ett långsiktigt arbete för att förstärka kopplingen mellan musikpraktiker och olika former av mänsklig blomstring så att musik och blomstring kan stöda varandra. Exempel ur deras undervisningspraktiker visar hur ordet ”god” får sin mening i ett sammanhang. Lärarna uppfattar det som centralt att eleverna utvecklar ett fritt och långvarigt intresse för musik, ofta beskrivet som *inspiration*. Jag föreslår att ”ett gott förhållande till musik” och ”inspiration” kan förstås som filosofiska medierande begrepp som stöder övergången från ett obestämt ”intresse för musik” till specifika sätt på vilka musiken kan bidra till ett gott liv i olika människors särskilda omständigheter.

Olika musikpraktiker betonar varierande aspekter av vad som anses viktigt i musik och i människans liv. Musikskollärare balanserar medvetet mellan många sådana värderingar. De anstränger sig samtidigt för att motstå yttre press som kunde hota det som de själva anser som viktigast och mest eftersträvansvärt. Sådana värden är bland annat glädje, envishet, solida musikfärdigheter relaterade

till specifika musikpraktiker, och en stark känsla av vitalitet. Insikterna från studien antyder att när lärarna lyckas med att skapa inspiration, verkar det ske genom ett komplext arbete där musikaliska mål och fostransmål kombineras på ett sådant sätt att det bidrar positivt till elevernas liv som helhet. Att försäkra sig om att lärande i musikskolor blir så konstruktivt och meningsfullt som möjligt för både elever och lärare är en krävande uppgift. Studien pekar på att kollaborativt, reflekterande och tvärvetenskapligt arbete kan stöda både individuella och kollektiva utvecklingsprocesser i anslutning till musikskollärares praktiker.

Sökord: musikpedagogik, musikskolor, musikpedagogisk filosofi, lärarpraktiker, kollaborativ forskning, lärarforskning

Acknowledgements

Every inquiry and every expertise builds on collective efforts. A monograph is the result of one person's work in name only. It is carried by people who have asked similar questions, often before the author was born. It comes into being with the help of a great number of persons who are involved in the project for longer and shorter periods of time. And eventually, readers participate through their response, dialogue, and the ways in which the text may perhaps become meaningful for their own work.

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List of abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the thesis:

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
CPD	continuing professional development
EMU	European Music School Union
FNBE	Finnish National Board of Education
MOP	Musiikkioppilaitos-tutkimusprojekti [The music school research project]
ISME	International Society of Music Education
SML	Suomen musiikkioppilaitosten liitto [The Association of Finnish Music Schools]

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Table 2 Template for group reflections

1. Introduction

A persistent challenge for publicly funded European music schools since at least the 1990s has been to adapt and develop in response to both public and scholarly debate about the contents and aims of their teaching. This study focuses on the aspirations and challenges of teacher practice in state-supported music schools in Finland. The research has been conducted during a time when Finnish music schools are going through a period of increased self-examination about quality and purpose, attempting to balance a variety of values while also facing external pressure to develop and change their practices.

Most of the extracurricular (noncompulsory) music education that takes place in Finland is organised through a network of music schools which receive law-based financial support from the state and from local authorities. Many of these schools belong to the Association of Finnish Music Schools which in turn is a member of the European Music School Union, a European association of over 6,000 publicly funded music schools. What member schools have in common are long-term, national efforts to organise systematic, high quality musical training in addition to the music education that primary and general secondary schools provide.¹ Public funding is granted in return for this commitment.

In post-Second World War Finland, the purpose of establishing music schools across the country was to raise the general level of music education, building continuity and uniformity in order to increase both the quantity and the quality of training by educating high-level music teachers and professional musicians, especially performers of Western art music. The principle of social and economic equality was a central part of this educational policy. In a sparsely populated country with large forests and rural areas, it was considered important to create opportunities for children to study music regardless of their regional, economic and social background (Heimonen, 2002; Hirvonen, 2003).

The initial vision of quality and equality in extracurricular music education in Finland seems to have been realised to a large extent. The number of Finnish musicians, conductors, and composers who have gained international reputation is larger than one would expect in a population of just over 5 million. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as ‘The Finnish music wonder’ (Sirén, 2010a), is often taken as evidence of a successful policy: future professionals have indeed received high quality training from early childhood. Music schools have also contributed to the flourishing of musical life in Finnish society and communities (Heimonen, 2013).

However, the system also has its challenges and problems. Discussions about public funding seem to resurface regularly: is it still appropriate to rely on the

¹ The notion of ‘high quality’ is related to the terms ‘quality music’ and ‘high art’, by which European music schools initially meant Western classical music (Schippers, 2010).

rationale that future musicians need early preprofessional training, or should society accept many reasons for funding music studies? (e.g. Pohjannoro, 2010). The structure of extracurricular music education has been described as “a pyramid standing on its head” with only a few percent of students realistically aiming at a professional career (Perälä, 1993), and dropout rates have caused concern (Heino & Ojala, 2006; Tuovila, 2003). In addition, although the original intention was egalitarian, it has been suggested that many students who attend music schools still seem to come from upper middle class or upper class families (Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007, p. 96).² More generally, music schools in Europe are affected, as is school music, by international debate about increasing diversity in music education³ and by research (e.g. Green, 2006; Ivaldi & O’Neill, 2008) that has identified gaps between young people’s interest in music and the values and routines of formal music education. At the same time, teachers and professional musicians in Finland have expressed worries about dispersion and about Finnish music education being “in decline” (e.g. Sirén, 2013).

At the end of the 1980s, the legal framework for Finnish music schools changed to include not only the responsibility for educating future professionals, but also to increase the interest in music in the entire population.⁴ In response to the need to accommodate broader educational aims that would be relevant for future professionals and nonprofessionals alike, and in line with a tendency towards more student-centred teaching, the national core curricula which regulate the activities of music schools underwent a number of changes in 2002 and 2005.⁵ Among the new fundamental aims that were adopted, the most important aspiration was to “create conditions in which a good relationship to music can be born”.⁶ The concept was introduced by Kurkela (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997), whose writings about music and the good life have influenced music school policy in Finland since the mid-1990s.

Elevating the ideal of a ‘good relationship to music’ to the status of an official policy was a remarkable change in the history of the Finnish music school system. The meaning of the concept was deliberately left open. Heimonen (2002) has noted that this is similar to how the main principle in Finnish child legislation, ‘the child’s best interest’, is defined more closely in practice: “How this should be done is a question of autonomy, a chance for reflection and

² A recent study on the student population of public cultural schools in larger cities in Norway reports a significant skew in favour of children whose parents have a higher level of education (Bjørnsen, 2012).

³ For example, between 2013 and 2015, The European Music School Union organised several “capacity building seminars” under the headline “Many students – Many pedagogies” (EMU website, <http://www.musicschoolunion.eu/>).

⁴ Act on music schools receiving state subsidy (Laki valtionosuutta saavista musiikkiopilaitoksista 402/1987).

⁵ Finnish National Board of Education (2002, 2005).

⁶ In Finnish: *luoda edellytyksiä hyvän musiikkisuhteen syntymiselle*.

dialogue between pupils, their parents and teachers” (p. 144). Applying the curriculum, Heimonen writes, may be compared to the Aristotelian description of the relation between general law and its applications. General law cannot take all individual cases into account. According to Heimonen, general principles in the curriculum also need “a skilful and a wise interpreter who can apply the text to the diverse particular cases in human life” (p. 38). The open nature of the notion ‘a good relationship to music’ is an explicit invitation to more profound reflection which is understood as an integrated part of the professional skill required by music school teachers. Several researchers noted that future studies might explore what music school teachers are attempting to accomplish in their classrooms: Heimonen (2002) suggested a focus on how legislation and national curricula are applied in practice on the micro level; Broman-Kananen (2005) argued that teaching in music schools can be described as an “art of the particular” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 14) and wondered how music school teachers experienced their work with local curricula.

This study was conducted a decade after the ideal of creating conditions for a good relationship to music became an official part of Finnish music school history and culture, and is published as a similar wording is about to enter the core curriculum for music in all comprehensive schools in Finland.⁷ I understand ‘a good relationship to music’ as an open, philosophical concept with many possible meanings, and as one articulation among many about what is considered ‘good’ in and about music education.⁸ The study builds on suggestions to examine how such meanings emerge as music school teachers talk about how they develop their practices. Its basic preassumption is that music education can be understood as embedding “varieties of goodness” (von Wright, 1963), expressed in various ways in different practices. Its theoretical and methodological framework is inspired by robust praxialism (Alperson, 2010b), a philosophical approach which is strongly committed to practitioner perspectives and to diversity in music and music education.

1.1 Developing practices of music school teaching

In the following section, the debates about aims and goods of music school teaching in Finland will be placed in a larger perspective and examined in the context of changes in the field of music education. I will discuss the concept of a ‘practice’, set out possible dilemmas that teachers are facing, and also relate the research project to my own professional experience. Finally, I will discuss the role of music school teachers themselves in the ongoing multi-actor debates about their work.

⁷ “Teaching and learning should support the development of a positive relationship to music” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 141, my translation).

⁸ A thorough discussion will follow in 2.3.

Music schools in changing times

Since the 1980s, the landscape of music education in Europe has changed in at least two important ways. The first change is connected with transformations within the music world itself. As a result of increased travelling, and especially new technology and new media, there is a new dynamic in the way global and local musics interact. Genres mix, merge, and multiply, and digital musicianship has added new dimensions to musical creativity, perhaps even altered the way we think about the nature of music itself (Burnard, 2012; Partti, 2012). The second change is the access to a growing body of research from a wide range of disciplines and fields of study related to music in people's lives: psychology, neuroscience, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, ethnomusicology, and their interfaces. Implications of these new perspectives include a broadening of the foundations for music education and for music education research. The contemporary world has become, as Westerlund (2002) pointed out already more than a decade ago, "conscious of the variety of ways one can educate and be educated musically" (p. 20). According to the AEC, the European Association of Conservatories, similar observations are voiced by instrumental/vocal teachers in both institutional and noninstitutional contexts across Europe:

Instrumental/vocal music education is developing a new consciousness about the wide range of roles that music plays in peoples' lives. Music does not only serve as a hobby or as a profession, but is also a vehicle towards personal development, social inclusion, cultural understanding, well-being and human fulfillment. (Hildén et al, 2010, p. 39).

What, then, are the consequences of these changes for practices in music schools? Music school teachers face not just a variety of learners, but also a great variety of musical practices and objectives for learning music that may be similar to or different from their own, require a variety of teaching strategies, and emphasise similar or different kinds or versions of goods. I follow Higgins (2011) in understanding a good as "something we judge to be worthwhile to have, achieve, attend to, or participate in" (pp. 48–49).⁹ But this definition does not in itself say very much about the many potential goods of music, or about who "we" are. In the past two decades, learner-centredness has emerged as a strong theme in music education, as student perspectives are increasingly valued and studied (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Burnard & Björk, 2010; Hanken & Johansen, 2013). Accordingly, Väkevä and Westerlund (2007) have argued that Finnish music schools "face a need to develop their local curricula in ways that could more plausibly answer the requests of the public" (p. 97).

The question of what musical traditions should be given priority in education has been a central feature of debate on music teaching and learning in the Western world for centuries (see Rainbow & Cox, 2007); arguments go back at least to Plato's opinions on citizenship education (*The Republic, III*). In Finland, several

⁹ The definition is articulated within Higgins' (2011) discussion of the implications of MacIntyre's (1981/2007) moral philosophy in the context of education.

scholars argued at the beginning of the 2000s that there was a worrying conflict between young people's interest in music and the more conservative training that music schools offered (Anttila, 2004; Lehtonen, 2004; Tuovila, 2003).¹⁰ Genre conflicts in Finnish music education have surfaced in public debate where school music teachers have been criticised not for being conservative, but for neglecting classical music treasures and national cultural heritage (Kimanen, 2011; Koppinen, 2013; Sirén, 2010b, 2013).¹¹ Other conflicts have also been pointed out. For example, in her study on the expansion of the network of Finnish music schools, Broman-Kananen (2005) argued that the profession changed in a radical way when teachers "stepped over the threshold of a classroom" (p. 5): music schools as institutions constituted a new world with new rules and new routines, not necessarily compatible with the practices of music and music teaching that were handed down within the apprenticeship tradition or cultivated in private music tutoring.

Music school teachers in several European countries seem to be under pressure to rethink their task and to broaden their outlook on educational content and practices, while simultaneously assuming the responsibility of safeguarding high quality music education. The demand for professional development among instrumental/vocal teachers both in Finland and in other parts of Europe currently exceeds the supply (Hildén et al, 2010; Tiainen et al, 2012). Other examples include France, where music schools have encountered "cascades of changes" and a "multiplicity of situations" (Regnard, 2011, p. 32) and Switzerland, where Ernst (2006) has reported that music school teachers feel a duty to transmit classical Western music traditions but are at the same time discussing the need of being "customer-oriented" and open to many different musical interests (p. 162). Approaches to teaching are also questioned; for example, Chmurzynska (2009) describes critique against music school teachers in Poland, explaining that instrumental teachers demonstrate high levels of self-appraisal in spite of their reputation of being unpsychological and lacking in pedagogical competence. In sum, both the nature and the degree of adaptation and change necessary for teaching and learning in music schools are under debate, and it is far from clear how change should be effected, on what criteria, on whose conditions, and on whose initiative.

¹⁰ Experiences from school music in Sweden, however, seem to indicate that simply replacing classical repertoire by popular music will not automatically bridge the teacher-student gap (see e.g. Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

¹¹ The prioritisation dilemma is well-known in international debates about arts education more generally. For instance, writing from the perspective of American arts curriculum already two decades ago, Bresler (1995) noted "a proliferation of values, differing with their view of what is worthwhile art knowledge, the organisation of learning opportunities, and suitable pedagogies for these learning opportunities" (p. 18).

Music school teaching and the concept of a ‘practice’

Throughout the study, I will use the concept of a ‘practice’ referring both to musical activities and music school teachers’ work. The terminology is not entirely unproblematic and the difficulties may in fact provide some initial keys to understanding the changing situations that music school teachers are facing. A very general definition of a practice refers to human activity, “the habitual doing or carrying out of something; usual or customary action of performance; conduct” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006). Another definition of a practice, according to the same dictionary, is “the carrying out or exercise of a profession or occupation”.

Several definitions of ‘practice’ are relevant to music school teaching. Music is something humans do as a nonprofessional habit or custom: a complex set of cultural and social practices. Music can also be practised professionally. Music teachers initiate students into musical practices, whether nonprofessional or professional. Gaining proficiency within a practice governed by internal criteria of excellence usually requires ‘practising’; yet another variation of the term. Finally, music teaching itself can be referred to as a practice or a set of practices.

The continuum between these different understandings of the core of music school teaching and learning, although perhaps not expressed in academic terminology, may be adding to the current challenges. Music school teachers can be seen as ‘practitioners’; professional carriers of traditions that they have a responsibility to keep up, defend, transmit, and develop. They are also likely to encourage their students to practise regularly. At the same time, students may register for music school lessons with the (at least initial) aim of learning music in the larger sense of a cultural practice or custom. Teachers may be asked to support and contribute to music as a social practice with many different purposes. For example, an increasingly important background feature of contemporary music education is public awareness, gained from reports on music and neuroscience, that learning music may be connected to other advantages such as improving students’ cognitive skills, language acquisition, ability to concentrate, motor coordination, and social functioning. A range of expectations on music schools and instrumental/vocal teachers can come not just from students and their parents but from various sectors of society and from government (Hildén et al, 2010, p. 32). Each of these objectives frames teaching and learning in a different way.

This study will take as its starting point the influential definition of a practice formulated by MacIntyre (1981/2007):

By a ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that sort of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended. (p. 187).

In order to qualify as such a practice, the activity should have links to a tradition and to narratives within which its internal “goods of excellence” (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 32) can be understood and improved. Such goods are distinguished from “external goods” or “goods of effectiveness” which can have supportive functions for a practice and occasionally reward some practitioners, but do not define or justify the practice; for example, money, fame, status, or power. The mark of goods of excellence is that they contribute to or are constitutive of human flourishing, both in individual lives and with regard to the entire community (MacIntyre, 1988, 1999). The definition of a practice can encompass both avocational and vocational activity, and it should be noted that although MacIntyre’s views are based on Aristotelian thought, his revisionist stance blurs the distinction between *praxis* (the faculty of acting) and *poiêsis* (the faculty of making)¹² and might therefore include many activities related to music.¹³

A main objection may be raised here against the use of this definition: that MacIntyre has famously and perhaps surprisingly argued against considering teaching a practice in itself. Instead, he thinks that teaching is to be understood as a nested part of any vital practice (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002). The goods of music teaching, in this view, would be subsumable under the categories of goods of musical practices. It is certainly the case that teaching and learning music are for the most part inseparable from musical practice itself. Still, MacIntyre (1999) does acknowledge that “all teaching requires some degree of care for the students *qua* students as well as for the subject-matter of the teaching” (p. 89) and that education is only good if it promotes the student’s good in a larger sense (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 105). His arguments do not seem to exclude the views that there is more to music school teaching than transmission of musical skill, and that teaching usually involves education understood more broadly. I follow Dunne (2003) and Noddings (2003) in asserting that education is indeed a “complex form of socially established cooperative human activity” with internal criteria and competences that can be subjected to continuing discussion and attempts at improvement. What is referred to as music school teacher practices in this study is the variety of activities that the teachers engage in with the aim of securing certain musical and educational goods, and the aspiration to improve and extend those activities as well as the conceptions of the ends and goods involved.¹⁴

¹² On the complicated and not always clear distinction between *praxis* and *poiêsis* in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Balibar, Cassin and Laugier (2014, pp. 821–822).

¹³ See Higgins (2011, p. 86.) For example, MacIntyre (1981/2007) takes both violin playing and portrait painting to be practices.

¹⁴ For further discussion of the view that MacIntyre held at least in 2002, see e.g. MacIntyre and Dunne (2002), Kemmis and Smith (2008, pp. 26–30), and Higgins (2011, pp. 190–198; 2012). Note also the references to “the virtues of teaching” and to “good teachers” in MacIntyre’s own writing (1999, pp. 77, 103).

Music schools host a number of practices and employ more than one kind of practitioner. The goods (in the MacIntyrean sense) of teaching practices are not necessarily tied to one assumed generic music school teacher identity, but rather to the various and specific musics and instruments taught within each school. Teachers are usually cast as highly specialised experts whose professional trustworthiness is best warranted by the musical and pedagogical skill they are able to demonstrate. Goods of excellence associated with their different practices, including qualities, skills, capabilities, or the acquired personal dispositions referred to as virtues in MacIntyre's Aristotelian moral theory, can vary or be emphasised in various ways. A piano teacher will perhaps encourage students to develop the stamina for engaging in long hours of solitary practice in order to refine their individual sounds, whereas a jazz musician will make sure that students know their repertoire standards and develop social skills which allow them to gain as much collective musical experience as possible. It is relevant here to consider, as Alpers (2014a) does, the argument by Geach (1956) that 'good' is an attributive adjective which acquires its meaning in context. Being a good rock drummer is different from being a good singer of Gregorian plainchant, and both are partly and in their own ways different from what goodness means in professions or social commitments outside music. The examples above illustrate the variety of possible practitioner aims and the difficulties involved in articulating collective, centralised policies for 'improvement' or practice development in music school teaching.¹⁵

Deliberation about music school teacher practices

What we see from the perspective developed above is a culturally diverse and complex contemporary landscape of music education, where the "requests of the public" may be as multiple and varied as the number of students. Heimonen (2013) notes that "Finnish music schools are presently balancing between different aims and values in their education" (para. 12). As teachers adapt to the situation, new discussions emerge. How, for example, can a conscientious music school teacher take on the daunting professional challenge of creating conditions for 'good relationships to music' (in the plural) for each of his or her students? How can music schools respond to a user-driven marketisation of music education where students and their parents may also be seen as service consumers and publicly funded training is just one alternative among many:

¹⁵ Some attempts at coordinating development on a European level have been made by the European music school union. For example, in 2003, suggestions for a European Information and Development Centre for music schools were put forward (European Music School Union, 2003); however, the plans were not realised.

private tuition, online learning communities, informal peer learning?¹⁶ Are we witnessing an overindividualising turn that fails to take social and possibly universal values in music into account?

Finnish government policies on education, including basic education in the arts, are currently characterised by relative restraint, although accountability agendas are gaining ground in all the Nordic countries (Langfeldt, 2011). Tendencies to decentralise pedagogical decision-making are characteristic of the current high-trust model¹⁷ of teacher professionalism in Finland (see e.g. Sahlberg, 2011). Since May 2014, music schools that operate within the system of basic education in the arts are under a legal obligation to arrange and publish internal and external evaluations of their activities.¹⁸ Individual teachers still enjoy substantial autonomy for better or for worse. The possible downside is that they are left to handle complicated or conflict-ridden situations on their own.

During my own years as an independent piano teacher in Belgium, I often missed the access to the reflective, collaborative, research-based casework which is characteristic of many other professions where human beings and their flourishing are at the centre of the activity. Through informal conversations with Finnish colleagues who had the same qualifications but were employed in publicly funded music schools, I gained support for the impression that although they worked within an institution and belonged to a more official community, we shared some of the same concerns, including lack of time and natural forums for internal and cross-disciplinary discussion. According to the European Association of Conservatoires, “the reflective nature of [instrumental/vocal teaching] requires opportunities to exchange experiences and engage in dialogue with a range of colleagues and specialists”, and while some discussion is possible during in-service training, there seems to be room for much more (Hildén et al, 2010, p. 25).

A survey commissioned by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council (Tiainen et al, 2012) revealed that collaborative practices such as peer mentoring are rare or very rare in Finnish music schools (p. 80). The findings in the survey are consistent with accounts of professional loneliness among music school teachers described in earlier studies from the same context (Broman-Kananen, 2005; Huhtanen, 2004). As described above, problems and shortcomings related to stagnant traditions in music school teaching have been amply discussed by researchers and in the media. However, little is known about how tradition and

¹⁶ In Sweden, teachers in municipal music and art schools are concerned that the music and cultural heritage that they master and value does not have an obvious place in a culture carried by market forces: “To be able to keep the students, (our jobs and the activities at the community schools of music and art) we are forced to adapt to the wishes of our students” (Holmberg, 2010, p. 218).

¹⁷ J. Elliott (2004, p. 286).

¹⁸ Act on Basic Education in the Arts (Laki taiteen perusopetuksesta 633/1998, §7).

renewal are present at the micro level of music school teacher practice, reflective deliberation and decision-making, how teachers negotiate their work in the tension between continuity and changing demands, and how they develop their practices. Similar knowledge gaps have been identified in music education more generally; for example, Burnard (2013, p. 10) remarks that there is little research on whether music teachers in various institutional settings experience tensions as productive or conflicting. There is “a kind of silence surrounding the [music] teacher as an agent, as one who theorizes” (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012, p. 124). Consequently, there is a risk that music school teachers become passive and imagined addressees of critique, advice, and policy derived from multi-actor public and scholarly debates, while their own solutions, value criteria, innovations and policy-making may remain unexplored, and their contributions to research underestimated.

In a call for more research on instrumental teaching already a decade ago, Triantafyllaki (2005, p. 386) suggested that teachers’ voices should have more prominence in conversations about their practices. Documentation from Finnish music school development projects (Koivisto-Nieminen & Holopainen, 2012) indicates that music school teachers are taking an increasingly active and proactive part in the debate about their work. Similarly, Finnish music school directors and teachers have called for a “major increase” in research related to their activities along with a stronger culture of collaboration and readiness to respond to changes in society, culture, values, and attitudes (Tiainen et al, 2012, p. 104). In what follows, deliberations about music school teaching will be treated as value-bound and ‘philosophical’ in nature; as conversations about what matters in music, education, and human life.¹⁹ In choosing this perspective, I take my cue from Jorgensen (2003), who argues that decisions about transforming music education, like other educational decisions, can only be justified “based on values that ultimately are defended philosophically” (p. 18). ‘Conversations’ are understood as taking place in several ways: in concrete discussions, as intrapersonal deliberation, and as symbolical statements made through activity and decision-making in practices (see 3.3). My intention is to study music school teachers’ aspirations, challenges and collaborative reflections at the crossroads between tradition and renewal, between policy and practice, and between “ideals and the feasible”.²⁰

¹⁹ Here, the term ‘philosophical’ is used both in its academic and more vernacular sense; see Higgins (2001) and Noaparast (2013).

²⁰ Shulman (2004, p. 534).

1.2 Rationale, general aim and research questions

Given the background discussed in 1.1, the rationale for this study may now be delineated as a set of four interrelated motives:

(1) *current debate* about the relation between tradition and change in extracurricular music education, (2) the *need for pedagogical development* expressed by teachers and directors in Finnish music schools, (3) the *need for research-based knowledge* about music school teacher practices, pointed out in recent studies, and (4) *personal interest* in the potential of collaborative support systems for instrumental/vocal teacher practices.

The concept of ‘a good relationship to music’ has been given special attention in this research project. As described above, the idea is central in the national core curricula for Finnish music schools and connected to the fundamental principle of Finnish child legislation; the best interests of the child. Attempting to understand how a rather general ideal related to goodness is realised in music school teacher practice is interesting. In addition, the concept is worth exploring by reason of its philosophical richness and complexity. Since the meaning of a good relationship to music is not defined in advance, it could be argued that adopting this aim as an official policy pushes teachers into at least a certain degree of deliberation about what kinds of ‘goodness’ can be achieved in and through music education; ultimately, this matter is connected to the question about conditions for a good life. Similar aims may or may not be explicitly included in aims for music education in other countries and contexts.²¹ However, the principle of the best interests of the child is included in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the subject therefore seems sufficiently general to be of relevance to international readers.

General purpose and research questions

With reference to the background and rationale discussed above, the purpose of this study is

to gain an understanding of the aspirations and challenges that emerge when music school teachers engage in collaborative reflection about practice development, especially with regard to the curricular ideal of promoting good relationships to music.

²¹ For example, some British music educators have thought along the same lines; see Hallam (2006): “What will be sustained over time is the child’s interest in music and the use of the particular musical skills that s/he acquired in the musical environment to which s/he was exposed. In a society where it is not possible, or desirable, for everyone to become professionally engaged in music, this is surely the most valuable educational outcome” (p. 106).

More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What aspirations are important to the music school teachers in the study and how can these aims be related to larger debates about values and goods in music education?
2. How do the music school teachers describe the solutions they develop in response to challenges in their practice, especially with regard to the aim of creating conditions for good relationships to music?
3. What aspects of collaborative reflection and inquiry, if any, do music school teachers find valuable for their practice development?

1.3 Setting and positionings of the study

In this section of the chapter, I will provide an overview of the local institutions and concepts that are relevant for understanding the setting of the study. I will also make some precisions about terminology related to teaching and learning in Finnish music schools. Finally, I will briefly indicate the theoretical and methodological positionings of the study.

Music schools in Finland

The institutional context of this study is the network of Finnish music schools that receive law-based public funding. These schools adhere to national standards and offer long-term tuition primarily to children and adolescents who are interested in acquiring a more extensive musical training than the regular school curriculum can provide.

Both school music and extracurricular music education have strong traditions in Finland. Music is a compulsory subject in primary and general secondary schools up to grade 7. In grades 1 to 6 the standard is one or two music lessons a week, but in schools where the local curriculum includes specialised ‘music classes’, there can be up to four lessons a week plus rehearsals with choirs, orchestras, bands or other ensembles. In grade 7 there is one compulsory music lesson a week, and in most schools music is an optional subject in grades 8 to 9 (Korpela et al, 2010). Usually generalist teachers (class teachers) are responsible for lessons in grades 1 to 6, whereas specialist teachers (music subject teachers) teach in grades 7 to 9. Qualifications for both categories of school music teachers include the completion of a master’s degree: for generalists, a Master in Education, and for specialists, a Master in Music Education.

Music education outside of the compulsory curriculum is arranged by publicly funded or private music schools, folk high schools, adult education centres and church parishes. Finland’s only university-level institution which specialises in music and music education, the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, has a junior department for school-aged young people with exceptional musical aptitude. The Finnish National Opera and several of the philharmonic orchestras across the country host projects for children and young people. Open

university courses are also available at the Sibelius Academy and at several other institutions for higher education (see Heimonen, 2013).

Among the providers of extracurricular music education, the most systematic organisation can be found in publicly funded music schools which follow national curricula.²² Training is referred to as goal-oriented education, progressing clearly from one level to the next with a unified, graded exam system. Although studies in music schools are nonobligatory with lessons generally taking place outside regular school hours and in separate facilities, they belong to the formal education system and often cooperate with primary and secondary schools. There are also classes for preschool children and open departments for adults. Classical music continues to dominate the repertoire, although ‘rhythm music’ (encompassing pop, rock, jazz, and other genres where rhythm is a strong defining element) is on the rise.

Typically, students will have at least two or three lessons each week at the music school, sometimes more according to age and experience: an individual lesson of 30–40 minutes for the main instrument; a weekly group lesson of 60 minutes in Foundations of music (including theory, solfège, music history and general knowledge of music); possibly some group tuition; often another individual lesson for a second instrument or singing; rehearsals with chamber music groups, rock bands, different kinds of orchestras, choirs, vocal ensembles; and rehearsals for performances from small-scale concerts to larger stage productions. Teachers give between 20 and 25 lessons a week: individual tuition, group classes, and/or a mix of both. In addition to the necessary preparations for teaching such as choosing and arranging repertoire, the teachers’ duties also include preparing and listening to student performances and serving as jury members during exams.

Securing resources for long-term musical training for children and young people was one of the prime reasons that the music school system was founded (Tuovila, 2003, p. 16). Publicly funded music schools also belong of a network of schools that offer basic education in the arts outside of the compulsory school curriculum.²³ Local authorities which provide basic education in the arts receive statutory government transfers based on the number of inhabitants. In addition, public and private education providers receive government grants based on the confirmed number of lesson hours given.²⁴

²² ‘Extracurricular’ education programmes with curricula issued by the government may seem like a contradiction in terms. The word ‘extracurricular’ is used for educational programmes outside compulsory schooling; see below, pp. 16–17.

²³ In addition to music, these art forms include literary arts, dance, performing arts (circus and theatre) and visual arts (architecture, audiovisual art, pictorial art, and arts and crafts). http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/perusopetus/taiteen_perusopetus/?lang=en

²⁴ http://www.oph.fi/english/education/basic_education_in_the_arts

In Finland, maintaining a nationwide network of public music schools is based on the constitutional principle of equal educational opportunities regardless of the student's geographical or social background (Heimonen, 2013). However, music schools that offer an extended syllabus designed to prepare for possible future vocational studies usually require admission tests. Just over half of the applicants are accepted to these schools, but admission rates may vary greatly between schools and regions.²⁵

Most European countries have institutions that are referred to as 'music schools'. There are no binding international requirements that music schools have to fulfil, but they are usually clearly defined institutions which form an integral part of the educational system in their countries and strive to differentiate themselves from commercially oriented enterprises (EMU website; Heimonen, 2002, p. 26) through efforts to make systematic, high-quality music education a public responsibility. Membership in a national association of music schools usually entails certain conditions related to public funding such as teacher qualification standards and specific requirements for organisation, curricula, and the range of courses that are offered. Some countries, including Finland, have legislation related to music schools. The aims and activities of Finnish music schools are governed by one Act and one Decree,²⁶ and national core curricula are issued by the Finnish National Board of Education, an autonomous national agency working together with the Ministry of Education and Culture.²⁷

The majority of the music schools in Finland are members of SML (*Suomen Musiikkioppilaitosten Liitto*, The Association of Finnish Music Schools), which was established by the state in 1956.²⁸ In 2016, SML counted 87 music schools and 10 conservatoires²⁹ as its members with music schools representing a total of about 66,000 students and 3,600 teachers. The association states as its task to promote the artistic and professional quality of music schools, to defend the interests of music schools in Finnish music and cultural life, and to maintain and develop international contacts. Member schools receive public funding both from the State and from local government. Approximately 20% of the tuition

²⁵ SML website, www.musicedu.fi. This practice sets Finland apart from other Northern European countries (Riediger, Eicker & Koops, 2010).

²⁶ Act on Basic Education in the Arts (Laki taiteen perusopetuksesta 633/1998), Decree on Basic Education in the Arts (Asetus taiteen perusopetuksesta 813/1998).

²⁷ Finnish: *Kouluhallitus*, Swedish: *Skolstyrelsen* prior to 1991; since then, *Opetushallitus* and *Utbildningsstyrelsen*, respectively.

²⁸ For excellent and detailed overviews in English of the organisation's background and history, see Heimonen (2002, 2013). Broman-Kananen (2005) has written extensively in Swedish about issues related to the development and critical phases of the Finnish music school as an institution.

²⁹ Finnish music conservatoires traditionally offer vocational music education but a majority of them also provide basic education in music according to the national extended syllabus (Finnish National Board of Education, 2002).

and associated costs are covered by student fees in 2016.³⁰ SML is Finland's affiliate in the European Music School Union (EMU), a nongovernmental and nonprofit organisation which represents the interests of publicly funded music schools in 24 European countries with altogether 6,000 music schools, 4 million students and 150,000 teachers in 2016.³¹ SML is also a member of the International Society for Music Education (ISME).

Studies in Finnish music schools are organised according to an extended syllabus (Finnish National Board of Education, 2002) and a general syllabus (FNBE, 2005) which are often, but not always, taught in different schools. The general syllabus puts the student's individual aims in focus, whereas the extended syllabus also prepares students for vocational music studies. Teaching the extended syllabus is a requirement for membership in the Association of Finnish Music Schools. State subsidies are almost exclusively directed towards music schools that teach the extended syllabus, while schools that teach the general syllabus may receive financial support from local authorities and cover remaining costs by charging student fees. The core curricula for both syllabi include the aim of promoting a good relationship to music.

In this study, the shorter term *music school* will be used for referring to Finnish music schools that apply the national curriculum for the extended syllabus and receive law-based state funding. I will use the same term when I refer to equivalent schools affiliated with national organisations that are members of the European Music School Union. This does not mean that music schools are the same in every member state; it also does not imply that concerns and issues that music school teachers face are not shared by music teachers in other countries and settings, whether public or private, but it accentuates the public responsibility that is an important part of music school teachers' professional lives.

Music school teachers

Several paths to the music school teacher profession are acknowledged in the current Finnish legislation. Many teachers have a degree from the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki or a university of applied sciences,³² but the professional background of faculty can vary greatly. A person is considered qualified to teach the extended syllabus in a music school if he or she has a "suitable" degree from a university or a degree in music education from a university of applied sciences. For the general syllabus, "other" training that can be applied in the context or "working experience that is considered sufficient" can be enough.³³ Although many music school teachers have

³⁰ SML website, www.musicedu.fi

³¹ European Music School Union, <http://www.musicschoolunion.eu>

³² Finnish: *ammattikorkeakoulu*, Swedish: *yrkeshögskola*; literally: vocational university.

³³ Decree on the qualification requirements for teaching personnel (Asetus opetustoimen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksista 986/1998).

substantial pedagogical training, the accepted diversity in qualifications sets them somewhat apart from generalist and subject teachers, who are expected to complete five full years of research-oriented education (Sahlberg, 2011).

The complexity of the professional landscape in music education in Europe more generally is illustrated by the slightly complicated nomenclature for designating music teachers, distinguished sometimes by their qualifications and sometimes by the institutions in which they are employed. In Finland, the term *music teacher* (Finnish: *musiikinopettaja*, Swedish: *musiklärare*) usually refers to a teacher who works in comprehensive schools (years 1 to 9) and general upper secondary schools. *Music pedagogue* (Finnish: *musiikkipedagogi*, Swedish: *musikpedagog*) is used in a larger sense and may in practice refer to both freelance teachers and teachers in any institution or organisation offering musical tuition; it is also the official name for the vocational degree that is awarded by universities of applied sciences (polytechnics). *Instrumental/vocal teacher* is the term currently used by the AEC (Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de musiques et Musikhochschulen) for teachers employed in music schools or in higher music education in Europe. Documents used by the European Music School Union employ the terms *teachers in music schools* and *music school teachers*³⁴ (EMU website; Maffli & Eicker, 2011; Riediger, Eicker, & Koops, 2010); sometimes the term is simply *music teacher*.

The term *music school teacher* positions teachers in relation to the institution where they are employed (Broman-Kananen, 2005, p. 15) and does not represent the full picture of their professional practice. On the other hand, teaching staff in Finnish music schools is not limited to instrumental/vocal teachers; for example, one of the participants in this study teaches a course that combines music theory, solfège and music history.³⁵ I will refer to the participants in the study as *music school teachers*, and when it is practical and the meaning is clear and unequivocal, simply as *teachers*. Sometimes, speaking about *instrumental/vocal teachers* will be adequate, for example in comparisons with teachers who are employed in similar institutions in other countries.

Music schools and the national core curriculum

The music schools that are in focus in this study are part of organised basic education in the arts, providers of which are governed by Finnish law, receive public funding, and follow national core curricula. It may seem paradoxical to refer to the ‘curricula’ of ‘extracurricular’ music schools. The term ‘extracurricular’ is used for lack of a better word: ‘voluntary’ could imply ‘forced’ as its opposite; ‘outside school’ is not completely accurate, given that law-based music schools often cooperate with comprehensive schools and that they have an official status within the formal education system. In this context,

³⁴ In German: *Musikschullehrer*; in French: *professeurs employés dans les écoles de musique*.

³⁵ The Finnish term for the course is *Musiikin perusteet* (roughly: Foundations of music).

‘extracurricular’ should be understood as an educational programme that is not part of compulsory education for all children. I will also refer to ‘music school education’.

The national core curriculum (Finnish: *opetussuunnitelman perusteet*, roughly: “foundations for the teaching plan”) for basic education in the arts consists of several chapters that establish the fundamental values and educational thinking which inform national guidelines. The text also provides requirements for teaching and learning for each art form separately. The core curriculum for music defines tasks, aims, contents, methods and assessment in two separate texts, one for the extended syllabus (*laaja oppimäärä*, “extensive quantity of learning”), corresponding to about 1300 hours of study, and one for the general syllabus (*yleinen oppimäärä*, “general quantity of learning”), corresponding to about 500 hours of study. Every authority (such as a municipality) that provides music education within the structure of basic education in the arts is also expected to develop its own, local curriculum.

In official English translations of policy documents related to music schools, the term curriculum is used for the Finnish word *opetussuunnitelma* as well as for the Swedish word *läroplan*.³⁶ Both the Finnish and the Swedish terms are closely related to the German word *Lehrplan*,³⁷ reflecting curricular development in the Nordic countries which is influenced by German/continental educational philosophy as well as the Anglo-American curriculum tradition (Hansén & Sjöberg, 2011; Hopmann & Riquarts, 2000).³⁸ The function of the core curriculum is to provide guidelines for teaching and learning, but there is a conscious aim to grant discretionary power to local authorities, music schools

³⁶ Finland has two constitutionally determined national languages: Finnish and Swedish.

³⁷ In Finnish, *opetus* (teaching) is defined as educational, goal-oriented interaction between teacher, student and content, the aim of which is to produce learning (Hirsjärvi, 1982). In recent years, there has been an emphasis on the processual and systemic nature of this interaction, and the term *opetus* is sometimes expanded into *opetus-opiskelu-oppimisprosessi*, translated as teaching-studying-learning process (cf. Hellström, 2008; Kansanen, Hansén, Sjöberg, & Kroksmark, 2011). All of these Finnish words have the same root, *oppia*, which is also found in the terms for teacher (*opettaja*) and student (*oppilas*). In Swedish, many words in relation to education are derived from the verb ‘to learn’ (*lära*): teacher (*lärare*), apprentice (*lärling*), science or doctrine (*lära*). One interpretation of this difference might be that in Finnish, there is more of a focus on an integrated process of teaching-and-learning, while in Swedish and in German there are a separate word for teaching (*undervisning*, *Unterricht*) and perhaps a more explicit distinction between teaching and learning.

³⁸ Kansanen (1995) points out that the term curriculum was used in both German and English until the 18th century, when it was replaced in German by *Lehrplan*. In the late 1960s, the word *Curriculum* returned to the German tradition, now influenced by Dewey’s focus on individual students and their experiences, and by the American approach to curriculum planning. Whereas the *Lehrplan* (teaching plan) literally set out a plan for content and activities when teaching a subject, the *Curriculum* broadened this definition by including every pupil’s learning (pp. 101–102). See also below, pp. 54–57.

and teachers, and to avoid unnecessary constraints (Heimonen, 2002, p. 165). The responsibility for interpreting and applying the aims and content in the core curriculum is delegated to each school where a specific curriculum is expected to be developed in the local context. Final decisions about implementation are worked out in the interaction between teachers and students within a system that explicitly values teacher autonomy. This practice is consistent with contemporary Nordic *didaktik*, where the teacher is seen as a reflective professional who is working within the framework that the state curriculum provides, but is not directed by it (Westbury, 2000, pp. 26–27).

Using the term ‘curriculum’ is complicated, since it means different things in different cultures and its referent may vary even within one culture (Autio, 2014; Kansanen, 1995). The questions about curriculum that are in focus in this study are not primarily related to teaching specific contents for different stages or to assessment and accountability. In Finnish music schools, requirements and suggestions for repertoire for intermediate and final exams are issued in the form of recommendations from the Association of Finnish Music Schools (SML). These guidelines may be considered as soft-law documents (see Heimonen, 2002, p.170) but still leave a substantial amount of discretionary power to teachers. The core curriculum is echoed even in SML documents, for example in the recommendation to grant more freedom to students and expect more responsibility from individual teachers: “[t]he most important thing is to stimulate an interest in playing and to sustain a good relationship to music” (Association of Finnish Music Schools, 2005: *Piano: Exams and criteria for assessment*, my translation). In this study, the focus on ‘good relationships to music’ concerns teachers’ reflections on practice understood in relation to the expression as it appears in the very first sentence of the core curriculum, where overall aims for teaching and learning in music schools are established. The term *curricular aims* will be used in reference to these foundational purposes, and when other curricular issues are discussed, this will be clearly mentioned.

Theoretical and methodological positionings

The study examines teacher practices in Finnish music schools through the aspirations and challenges that emerge as music school teachers engage in reflection and inquiry about their daily practice. These empirical perspectives will be related to historical and current ideas about how music education contributes to the good life, and to an open curricular concept with philosophical undertones, namely ‘creating conditions for a good relationship to music’. Relevant bodies of background knowledge are primarily found in (1) scholarship from the context of teaching and learning in Nordic music schools, and (2) literature on the philosophy and history of music education, as well as studies from different disciplines which can illuminate philosophical and historical claims. The overall theoretical framework is influenced by “robust praxialism” (Alperson, 2010b); a particular strand of thought within the praxial approach to the philosophy of music education which was initially articulated with support

from MacIntyre's practice definition. The "robust" emphasis on practices in Alperson's work is motivated by a determination to let what practitioners say and do "drive philosophical inquiry into the central concepts, actions, social and political factors, values, goods, and harms of musical practice".³⁹ In the present study, the intention to study music school teachers' aspirations from their own point of view is reflected in the qualitative-interpretive methodological framework of the study. The research design builds on a collaborative approach to data generation and a method for data analysis developed from interpretive analysis as described by Yanow (2000) and Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012). In combining a philosophical perspective on the goods of music education with empirical research, I follow the suggestion by J. Elliott (2000/2007) that educational inquiry always involves (or should involve) an aspiration towards knowledge of the human good as well as a focus on the development of teacher practices.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In this first chapter, I have introduced the setting of the study, the challenges of music schools in Europe and in Finland specifically, and the terminology which will be used in the study. I have presented the background, purpose and research questions of the study, and provided initial theoretical and methodological positionings for the research. In chapter 2, I will review aspirations and challenges of music school education as they emerge in previous studies from the Nordic countries. I will then take a wide perspective on the possible value(s) of music education, discuss how 'goodness' has been attributed to music and music education, and argue that robust praxialism is a helpful theory for examining such valuation processes. I will examine how the notion 'creating conditions in which a good relationship to music can be born' developed, how it has been understood in the Finnish music school context, and how it relates to similar ideas presented in international music education scholarship. Chapter 3 covers the logic behind the choice of methodology and research methods. In chapter 4, I present the research design. The descriptions in these chapters are rather detailed, showing how a theoretical orientation towards robust praxialism can be integrated with teacher inquiry and reflecting conversation approaches. The process of interpreting data is also explained step by step and shows how several rounds of analysis have been carried out, partly with support from a modified version of interpretive policy analysis. Chapter 5 contains reports from five music school teachers' practices, a summary of common themes discussed during the collaborative project, and a report on reciprocal learning that resulted from the project. Finally, in chapter 6, I present conclusions, discuss insights and interpretations, evaluate the methods used, and consider contributions and possible implications of the study from the perspectives of practice, scholarship, and policy.

³⁹ P. Alperson, personal communication, January 12, 2015.

2. Theoretical landscapes: Music education and the varieties of goodness

In this chapter, I will examine what an ideal for music education related to goodness might imply in its variety, mediated by practices of teaching and learning music. Literature reviews in interpretive research are usually rather broad, sketching out “the domain in which the conversation concerning the research question is taking place” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 126–127). The conversations visited in the chapter range from general debates about the aims of music education to specific discussions about the purposes of Finnish music school education. First, I will provide a review of research related to the aims of music school teaching and learning in Finland and the other Nordic countries (2.1). I will then discuss how goodness and value may be attributed to music, how different conceptions of goodness frame music education, and how a particular approach to the philosophy of music education (“robust praxialism”) may support research in music education (2.2). Next, I review and discuss some of the ways in which it has been thought that music and music education can contribute to the good life of children and young people (2.3). After a brief overview of Finnish educational thought, I will examine how values attributed to music education have been articulated in national debate and policy documents related to Finnish music schools (2.4). I then turn to the genesis and development of the concept of ‘a good relationship to music’ (2.5). Finally, I analyse how it has been thought that music teachers, particularly Finnish music school teachers, can promote good relationships to music (2.6). As all of these overviews make clear, there are no singular, clear-cut, or final views on what makes music valuable for children and young people or what a good relationship to music is. This chapter, in accordance with the entire study, takes the perspective of ‘listening in’ on conversations that have been going on for large parts of the history of music education, and that are likely still to be relevant to practice development in music schools.⁴⁰

2.1 Aims and challenges of music school teaching: Previous research

In this section, I review a selection of studies on music school teaching in the Nordic countries and analyse aims and challenges as they emerge in the different research projects. Some reports from music schools in France, Switzerland and Poland have already been mentioned. The review below is limited to studies from Finland and the other Nordic countries, which are most comparable to each other through their long traditions of public sector funding and their purposes of combining high quality teaching and learning with democratic ideals and the

⁴⁰ The expression “varieties of goodness” is borrowed from the title of Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright’s book on ethics (1963), but the reference should not be understood in terms of methodological similarity or comparison; rather, as an homage.

notion of ‘music for all’.⁴¹ In addition, I have limited the review to research from the past two decades and to inquiries with relevance to the present project. I will focus on the aims and challenges of teaching and learning in music schools and the ways in which the concerned actors and policy makers, according to the studies, have thought that these purposes might best be promoted.

In Finland, research on music schools since the late 1990s has generally been related to one or several of three major issues. First, there has been a concern that large numbers of children learn music inside an educational system which used to be primarily destined for preprofessional training, a situation which might have the unwanted effect of leaving most students with a sense that they are failing. Second, for the same reason, there has been a concern for teachers, whose professional identity and pride used to be tied to the objective of training future professionals and who might be facing a sense of double failure: becoming a teacher instead of making a more valued career as a musician, and teaching children who for the most part will not study music professionally. Third, researchers have attempted to analyse the quality, scope and appropriateness of approaches to teaching and learning in music schools. Suggested solutions and directions for development tend to crystallise in terms such as *flexibility*, *versatility* and *individualisation*, often bringing arguments close to some liberal tradition where individual freedom is promoted (see Heimonen, 2002). The review that follows will indicate how the three issues mentioned above have been treated by different researchers, but also show that in some areas, there has been a chronological progression as new curricula have been developed and music schools have adapted in response to criticism and new ideas.

A major evaluation of education in Finnish music schools was undertaken by the National Board of Education in 1998 (Heino & Ojala, 1999). The study included a report from visits at six music schools (Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999). One key finding was that the national curriculum was not always discussed and the local curriculum was not necessarily seen as particularly relevant or important for the daily work. This worried the authors, because both of them had previously been active in emphasising collaborative reflection on the deeper purposes of music schools with the overall aim of protecting values of flexibility, freedom and joy along with high quality in teaching and learning (p. 106). The authors also noted that music school teachers sometimes had to handle tasks that pushed them to the edge of their professional competence, since they were sometimes the only trusted adults available to offer support and security

⁴¹ At the time of the study, the Nordic countries are cooperating to articulate a common Nordic music school policy (<http://damusa.dk/et-staerkt-ja-til-nordisk-samarbejde/>). For an overview of the patchwork of ideals and policies represented by the national music school associations that are members of the European Music School Union, see Riediger, Eicker and Koops (2010). For an in-depth comparison between Swedish and Finnish music schools, see Heimonen (2004).

during crises in students' lives. The possibility of providing professional supervision or similar forms of support in order to protect the well-being of teachers was discussed.⁴²

Starting from the two principles “the right to education” and “freedom in education”, Heimonen (2002) explored legislation pertaining to Finnish, Swedish and German music schools in an interdisciplinary study with both hermeneutic and analytical features. Combining perspectives from music education and from law, she asked what kind of regulation would best promote the aims of extracurricular music education for children and adolescents. The study concluded that a regulative model which maintains a good balance between positive and negative freedom would secure financial stability while producing conditions for human autonomy. According to Heimonen, this would leave space for teachers, students and families to pursue “holistic” aims in music education; in other words, a variety of aims related to human experience (p. 21).

Around the same time, several researchers turned their attention to students' experiences of music school studies. Framing her understandings through existential phenomenology, Kosonen (2001) found that for 13- to 15-year-old piano students, “essential” personal meaning emerged as a “network” which involved music itself, the joy of playing, and enjoying the contact with a skilled, encouraging teacher (pp. 142–143). Similarly, in a narrative-biographical study of young piano students' identities, Hirvonen (2003) found that for young students who had moved from having music as one hobby among others to becoming a music professional, social interaction with significant persons was central. Recognition achieved through successful studies and competitions played a major role, but one particular, supportive teacher had often been of key importance to the students' accomplishments and the orientation of their studies. Tuovila (2003) combined philosophical and critical hermeneutics with research on childhood and child-centred music education in order to gain deeper knowledge about 7- to 13-year-old children's music making and experiences of music school studies and form a research basis for improving music school teaching. Grounding her results in interviews with 66 children at four music schools in Helsinki, their parents, teachers and headmasters, Tuovila found that learning outcomes were strongly influenced by the degree to which the children felt that their own goals and proposals had an effect on teaching. The personal and diverse character of music school studies was highlighted in all three studies. Kosonen called for clearer acceptance of other than preprofessional aims. Hirvonen suggested that increased attention to students as individuals and to teachers' personal qualities might be helpful for a better understanding of successful teaching and learning. Tuovila noted that collaboration between students, parents and teachers was central in developing approaches to teaching

⁴² In Finland, professional supervision (*työnohjaus* in Finnish, *arbetshandledning* in Swedish) aims at supporting professionals in processing work-related issues, experiences and emotions, see <http://www.suomentyonohjaajat.fi/english/index.php>.

that would prevent dropout and promote desired musical learning outcomes as well as self-esteem, group participation, and personal initiative.

Two scholarly books published shortly after these studies (Anttila, 2004; Lehtonen, 2004) reported that students' experiences were not only positive in Finnish music schools. The authors directed strong critique against what they described as unpsychological, narrow and even abusive approaches to teaching and learning music. They also discussed the issue of dropouts from music schools, suggesting that disappointment might be one reason that students discontinued their studies. Research that might explain the relatively high rate of dropout has not been conducted and recent statistics are not available, but the problem seems to persist. According to an estimate by the chair of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, only slightly more than one in three students will take the first level of final music school exams, and only about 5% of students graduate from the advanced syllabus programme, numbers tending downwards to correspond roughly to the proportion of students who continue to professional studies (L. Nystén, personal communication, September 23, 2015). Dropout rates recorded by the National Board of Education in 2004–2005 (Heino & Ojala, 2006) revealed that yearly, 9.2 % of all music school students (extended and general syllabus combined) interrupted their studies, 8.2 % among females and 9.4 % among males.⁴³

Two studies from the mid-2000s focused on teachers. Using a narrative-biographical approach, Huhtanen (2004) analysed the experiences of thirteen Finnish women who were educated as pianists but had become piano teachers. The transition from one identity to another was described as a conflict-laden experience of 'ending up'. The respondents often felt at a loss about how to handle the realities of classroom teaching but rarely shared their experiences with colleagues. Broman-Kananen (2005) set out to describe, analyse and understand the qualitative consequences of the increase in number and importance of Finnish music schools, especially from teachers' points of view. The study used a historical and biographical approach, building on Giddens' concept of 'episodes' (Giddens, 1984, 1990). On the basis of autobiographies written by 38 teachers and analysis of articles, laws, committee reports and curricula, Broman-Kananen identified two major transitions in the history of Finnish music schools between the 1960s and the mid-1990s. The first transition occurred when a pioneer generation of music school teachers, deeply committed

⁴³ Music schools surveyed by Heino and Ojala (2006) cited quite a large number of different speculations about reasons for student dropout, including school work, other interests, friends, adolescence, youth culture not supporting traditional studies, unwillingness to pass exams, financial problems, relocation, inability in students to commit to long-term study, and "lack of talent and application" (pp. 23–24, my translation). According to the chair of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, students seem primarily interested in learning practical music skills, not in graduating; one reason may be that no points are currently attributed for music school exams in applications to higher education (L. Nystén, personal communication, September 23, 2015).

to “the force of music” (p. 109), created teaching routines for classrooms; the second followed when younger teachers faced changing realities and were forced to deal with breaking points, crises and dilemmas in their professional identities and routines. Overall, Broman-Kananen argued, there were signs of an “individualising shift” where teachers were searching for “something of their own” (p. 5), and their reflecting both on teaching itself and on the grounds for it had given rise to a new “reflexive and questioning teacher identity” (p. 6).

Both studies seemed to indicate that music school teachers could no longer be fitted, Procrustean-style, into identities of failed or reasonably successful instrumental soloists whose task it would be to provide young children with the basics for attempting ‘serious’ careers. According to Huhtanen, the reserve of cultural stories about being a music professional needed to be enriched if instrumental teaching was to gain more recognition. She criticised the Sibelius Academy for favouring soloist identities over teacher identities, and recommended a more child-centred perspective in future teacher training. Similar critique was articulated by music school directors interviewed for a subsequent report (Pohjannoro, 2010).

From the mid-2000s, acknowledgement that music schools needed a more diverse basis for their activities was visible in several research projects. In a second major study carried out by the National Board of Education, Heino and Ojala (2006) conducted surveys on how music school directors and/or other staff in positions of responsibility thought that teaching and learning should be developed in the future. Respondents continued to insist that contents and teaching methods needed to be developed and that dropouts needed to be prevented. In addition, they pointed out that methods for student assessment had to be improved, and that music schools would be well-advised to find new ways of making music in groups.

Since the field of music itself was changing and diversifying, music school teachers’ qualifications were called into question. As part of a comprehensive analysis of the relation between areas of musical activity and professional competence, two national reports about music schools were carried out between 2008 and 2010. Music school directors reported that their teachers were still lacking professional knowledge with respect to musical versatility (generally meaning knowledge of other than classical genres), group and ensemble teaching, and improvisation. In addition, general pedagogical knowledge and skill as well as knowledge about early childhood education were specifically mentioned as areas in need of development (Pohjannoro & Pesonen, 2009, p. 13). Among societal tendencies which could have a negative effect on music schools, respondents mentioned a general decline in appreciation for arts and artistic skill combined with commercialisation of art, leading to a situation where the values of art risked being confounded with market values and the contents and aims of music school teaching might be defined by market demand or providers of funding (p. 22).

A follow-up study (Pohjannoro, 2010) relied on qualitative interviews with nine music school directors who had been identified as “visionary” on the basis of the first report (p. 10).⁴⁴ In line with the previous study, the results suggested that music schools were moving towards increased versatility and flexibility in terms of courses offered, methods used, and target groups envisaged. Developing a strong teacher identity and “educational attitude” (p. 61)⁴⁵ was considered important; the two pillars of music school teaching being defined as expertise/mastery (of an instrument) and pedagogical knowledge. One aspect of pedagogical skill which was mentioned as a crucial challenge was the ability to motivate students for long-term commitment to music. As Tuovila’s (2003) study had already indicated, child-centredness, sufficient individualisation, and clear and constructive communication between music schools, students and families were seen as good ways of preventing frustration and dropout. Music school directors tended to consider younger teachers as more able to relate well to children and adapt teaching methods and contents as needed, whereas the older generation was sometimes seen as being disadvantaged in this respect, notably since their education had not always included courses in developmental psychology.

By the early 2010s, then, there seemed to be consensus that pedagogical development was the key to desired results, but how the work should be done was another issue. Pohjannoro (2011) noted that music school education characterised by variety, flexibility, and a sense of responsibility for both future amateurs and professionals would require systemic, comprehensive and holistic approaches to development.⁴⁶ On the whole, music school teachers were perceived as committed and appreciated professionals. Enhanced professional knowledge seemed to be called for in the areas of “pedagogical ability” and “interaction skills” (p. 11).⁴⁷ Although there had been a clear increase in music making in groups since the first report by Heino and Ojala (1999) and the importance of community and social dimensions of music was widely accepted, teachers’ lack of experience in leading groups, ensembles and orchestras sometimes slowed down desired development. In the future, it was argued in the report, music school teachers would be expected to serve local, versatile “centres

⁴⁴ Eight of the respondents were directors at music schools as defined in the present study.

⁴⁵ The Finnish expression used was *kasvatuksellinen asenne*, which might be translated as an attitude characterised by a readiness to take responsibility for students’ development both in music and as growing human beings.

⁴⁶ I have used all three words to attempt to cover the Finnish term *kokonaisvaltainen*, which can translate as holistic, overall, concerning the whole person, pervasive, comprehensive, global, systemic, and integrated. Several of the English terms seem to apply here; the reader is trusted to refer to the contextual meaning.

⁴⁷ In Finnish: *pedagoginen osaaminen* (*osaaminen* referring to both ability and knowledge) and *vuorovaikutustaidot* (communication skills or interaction skills, both related to social skills).

of expertise” (Pohjannoro, 2011, p. 11) which would collaborate across art forms and sectors of society.

At the request of the National Ministry for Education and Culture, Tiainen et al (2012) evaluated the functionality of national core curricula and the pedagogy applied within basic education in all the arts included in the system. The empirical material included surveys of school directors (N = 291), teachers (N = 443) and visits to educational institutions (N = 22). According to the evaluation group, teaching methods in music schools were generally good or very good; the degree to which students were taken into account and listened to was by now considered excellent. Suggestions for further development included efforts to increase gender equality,⁴⁸ strengthen pedagogical methods for different learners, and provide better possibilities for students to choose their own paths within the framework of the national curriculum (p. 102). In addition, internal evaluation and continuing professional development among teachers were seen as important across all schools providing basic education in different art forms. Pedagogical development projects existed, but were still rather modest. A substantial increase in research related to pedagogical development within basic education in the arts was seen as desirable. Directors and teachers noted that lifeworlds, values, and opinions about what should be considered important in life were shifting rapidly among students and their parents. Music school teachers and directors in the study called for increased “networked development” and “internal discussions about the aims, methods and successes of development” (p. 104, my translation). In a report on experiences gained from an internal evaluation program developed for schools that provide basic education in arts, several school representatives mentioned that they had been missing collegial discussions about teaching and learning and appreciated the opportunity for collective debate (Marsio, 2014, p. 31).⁴⁹

In the first study on the subject of gender in Finnish music schools, Kuoppamäki (2015) combined her positions as a researcher and teacher, indicating perhaps that music school teachers were ready to take research on important issues into their own hands.⁵⁰ Kuoppamäki used ethnographic practitioner inquiry to

⁴⁸ Of the students in music schools which are members of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, 64% are female and 36% are male (SML website, http://www.musicedu.fi/fi/etusivu/usein_kysytyta/tiesitko_etta. Retrieved August 4, 2015).

⁴⁹ Similarly, in a study among teacher educators in higher music education in Finland, Juntunen (2014) found that educators rarely shared, discussed or negotiated their teaching with colleagues. Visions related to teaching were strong, but they were seen as personal and private, constructed through own experiences of being a teacher and a musician. Sometimes, educators expressed the need to collaborate, but stated that “not all [colleagues] were willing to share their pedagogical expertise and/or talk openly about pedagogical issues” (p. 172).

⁵⁰ In addition to the larger studies presented here, a remarkable number of theses about music school teaching have also been written for master’s degrees and vocational de-

understand gendered negotiations among 9-year-old children who participated in the Finnish music school course ‘Basics of music’ (referred to below as Foundations of music). Her findings suggested that ongoing gendered border work in groups interfered with learning and construction of musical agency and required both reflection and sensitivity on the part of the teacher. In particular, Kuoppamäki concluded, the teacher’s ability to move focus from gendered groupings and polarised identities to individual meaning and creativity was decisive in order to facilitate access to participation and meaningful collaborative learning.

By virtue of its focus on developing new forms of expertise in instrumental/vocal teaching, the dissertation *Towards sensitive music teaching: Pathways to becoming a professional music educator* (Huhtinen-Hildén, 2012) also has connections to this study. Within the theoretical framework of empirical hermeneutic psychology, Huhtinen-Hildén examined the development of expertise and a professional music teacher identity during a pilot training programme at a Finnish university for applied sciences.⁵¹ The study showed that deepening professional expertise was gained through spirals of experience and reflection through which new goals could emerge. If music educators could find “their own way” in music, Huhtinen-Hildén suggested, this might help them to facilitate the same kind of processes in their students. The emphasis on “own pathways” might be seen as confirming Broman-Kananen’s (2005) suggestion that music school teacher identities were becoming strongly individualised projects. However, Huhtinen-Hildén insisted that nurturing learning environments, an experimental learning approach, and “collaborative learning with meaningful others” seemed important for development towards the ability of “sensitive music teaching” (p. 255).

Finally, in her study of Finnish school music teacher practices, Muukkonen (2010) found that content and methods in use were multilayered, reflecting curricula from different traditions and times. Teacher practices seemed to develop not in a linear fashion, where earlier approaches would be discarded, but in a cumulative way, where new aims and ideals were added to the old without anything really being renounced (p. 228). Taken together, current debate and previous studies on music school teachers’ practices seem to indicate that Muukkonen’s findings may be relevant also in the context of the present study.

grees. For example, the open repository of the Finnish universities of applied sciences registers over 180 theses related to music school teaching from 2007 to 2015 (https://www.theseus.fi/search?scope=%2F&query=musiikkioppilaitokset&rpp=10&sort_by=0&order=DESC&submit=Go). Although I will not refer to these studies in detail, it is interesting to note that many prospective new teachers have been interested in critical discussion and inquiry about teaching and learning in the music school environment where most of them received their initial training.

⁵¹ Graduates from the music educator programmes at universities of applied sciences often find employment in music schools, as mentioned in chapter 1.

Research on music schools in the other Nordic countries: an outlook

As the review of research related to Finnish music schools shows, studies have tended to focus increasingly on professional development, prompted by findings that support a move towards more versatile and personalised teaching. This section will review research on music schools in the other Nordic countries. The most important aims of music schools in all Nordic countries are shared: to provide affordable and equal access to qualified musical tuition which promotes lifelong interest and participation, whether students later choose to pursue professional training or not. Finnish music schools differ from their Nordic neighbours through the stronger and more comprehensive legal regulation of their activities; the specific training for music school teacher qualification; the practice of arranging admission tests or introductory years after which students are assessed and admitted on the basis of motivation and ability; and the graded system of intermediate and final exams.⁵² Some Finnish music schools offer dance training as well, whereas other art forms are usually taught in separate schools. In Sweden, corresponding schools are often referred to as ‘culture schools’, and in Norway also as ‘schools of music and performing arts’. These schools offer education in several art forms, but music is the most popular option, chosen by 80% of Swedish pupils and 70% of Norwegian pupils (Sandh, 2012). The aim of making music education accessible to every child is strong in all the Nordic countries, but applications of the principle vary and the ideal is not necessarily actualised in practice.⁵³

Tracing the history of the Swedish municipal music school, Persson (2001) described how social and collective motives for initiating music schools were important in the 1940s, whereas pluralism and striving to adapt teaching and learning to fit the individual became dominating values during the 1990s. Striving to keep “in tune with changes in society” (p. 8), music schools developed into culture schools which offered broader training, including art forms other than music. Persson pointed out that although (as in Finland) music school policies aimed to promote equality and democracy, recruitment to the schools was socially, culturally and economically biased. This observation has been supported in several other studies where findings indicate favouring of females, children of higher employees, and children whose parents have a Western background (e.g. Brändström & Wiklund, 1995; Hofvander Trulsson, 2010).

Tensions between the musical preferences of students and teachers have also been analysed and discussed. A study published in the early 2000s (Rostvall &

⁵² See Sandh (2012). Iceland applies a graded system which builds on traditions from the Associated Board in the UK and which seems most well-adapted to students of classical music, see <http://www.profanefnd.is/>

⁵³ For example, in Norway, every municipality is required to provide a culture school, but local authorities may limit the activities of the school on financial grounds. Just over 27,000 children were on waiting lists in 2014–2015, see <https://gsi.udir.no/>.

West, 2001) indicated that teachers still largely dominated and defined what was happening during lessons in Swedish music schools. The study revealed routine-like teaching methods which seemed to neglect musical experience and the expressive features of the music, and were detrimental to students' interest in music. As in Finland, the relatively high level of dropout from music schools caused concern. The authors suggested that one explanation might be that teachers lacked both opportunities to discuss teaching and learning with their peers and a "developed professional language based on research" to do so (Rostvall & West, 2003, p. 224).⁵⁴

In two Swedish dissertations, discourse analysis was used to investigate the question of what might be expected of music school teachers in a changing and increasingly complex world of music. On the basis of a questionnaire returned by 834 Swedish music school teachers, Tivenius (2008) created a typology of eight different kinds of teachers, each with their characteristic set of attitudes and values, generated from combinations of four factors: mission (attributing important value to classical music "and its culture"); feeling (emphasising children's own feeling for music and the value of acquiring it); foundation (building on a "biological, inborn faculty of singing and rhythmic consciousness") and student focus (adapting teaching to the student's preferred music). One conclusion was that teachers' attitudes and sets of values were developed within and corresponded to the traditions of the subjects that they taught (p. 232). The structured conservatoire system based on classical music seemed to be used as "cement" in order to avoid a scenario where diversity would "collapse" into "mess". Tivenius argued that this striving for stability needed to be balanced with reform of the education of music school teachers "with the starting point in democracy and philosophy" (p. 235).

The dissertation by Holmberg (2010) is in part comparable to the current study through its focus on music school teachers' own activities and conversations. The aim of the study was "to investigate how teachers at the musical schools of music and art talk about their own activities in group conversations" (p. 209) and to understand how teachers construct their activities, their students and themselves. Holmberg interviewed 27 teachers from six music schools, using a combination of discourse analysis and conversation analysis to understand "antagonisms and hegemonies" related to music school teacher practice (p. 215). In line with tendencies in Finland, the results suggested a shift from tradition-centred teaching to child-centred approaches. Here, however, the shift was expressed mainly as a tension between classical and popular music. In Holmberg's view, the direction taken was not unproblematic. In late modernity, she argued, culture schools in Sweden seemed to have succumbed to market aesthetics. Under the name of student-centred learning, teachers often denied the cultural heritage and musical traditions that were important to them. In order not

⁵⁴ Zandén (2010) noted a similar lack of a common professional, contextual language among music teachers in Swedish upper secondary schools.

to seem old-fashioned and under the threat of losing their students, teachers “abdicated” and served children’s desires, which in turn were heavily influenced by commercial media. According to the interviewed teachers, culture schools ran the risk of becoming “amusement parks” designed to please “ego children” (p. 221). Although the aims of student-centredness, local autonomy, openness, popular music and the ideal of music for all were not seen as negative in themselves, the author argued that in complying with students’ interests, teachers also risked having to comply with market aesthetics, thereby impoverishing valuable bases of musical knowledge. These points were similar to opinions voiced by Finnish music school directors in the report by Pohjannoro and Pesonen (2009).

Parental expectations of music schools have been studied by Lilliedahl and Georgii-Hemming (2009), who conducted in-depth interviews with twelve parents whose children attended Swedish municipal schools of art. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors found that a general concern for their child’s well-being was most central to parents and that they expected the studies to contribute to both social and musical development. Music was seen as being generally beneficial, having the potential to improve quality of life. Parents hoped that their children would enjoy music, have fun, and perhaps find ‘their thing’, whereas expectations on progress and craftsmanship were rather low. Some parents articulated their wishes in a phrase quite similar to the Finnish policy of promoting a lifelong interest: children “might discover that music can be a source of joy throughout their lives” (p. 264). What parents and students expected, it was noted, can generate “infinite variations” (p. 266). Since parental commitment has been shown to matter for student success (see Calissendorff, 2005), the authors argued, as Tuovila (2003) did in her study about Finnish music school students’ experiences, that an open and lively dialogue about musical and extramusical objectives would be the most important starting point for lessons.

Finally, potential problems with unexamined transmission of practices were visible in research on the ergonomics of music school teaching and learning. Fjellman-Wiklund and Sundelin (1998) found a high prevalence of both musculoskeletal discomfort (see also Wahlström Edling & Fjellman-Sundelin, 2009) and psychosocial strain among teachers in a music school. Kaladjev (2000) called for preventive measures on the basis of results which indicated that musculoskeletal problems among professional musicians, music teachers and music students (both in music schools and higher music education) were frequent to the extent that it was possible to speak of a predisposition.⁵⁵

In Norway, a pilot study based on in-depth interviews with fourteen culture school directors (Gustavsen & Hjelmbrekke, 2009) indicated that lower

⁵⁵ For a complete review of studies related to teaching and learning in Swedish music schools and cultural schools, see Lindgren (2014).

socioeconomic status seemed to have a negative influence on children's tendency to attend music schools, a skew also reported in Sweden, as discussed above. The researchers remarked that the ideal of equality was far from being realised, adding that access for a larger number of children might be facilitated through increased versatility (in particular, moving beyond what might be considered 'high culture') and openness for different cultural preferences.

Following these indications of inequality, Bjørnsen (2012) analysed the relation between socioeconomic status and culture school attendance, attempted to identify possible barriers for attending culture schools, and evaluated the effects of an intervention programme designed to increase accessibility. The results indicated that the vast majority of culture school students were children of parents who had a higher level of education (88.3% of respondents). Household income, on the other hand, did not seem to influence attendance, confirming suggestions by Bourdieu (1979) that high cultural capital does not necessarily correlate with high economical capital (Bjørnsen, 2012, p. 53). The most common reasons parents gave for enrolling their children in culture schools were the child's wish to play an instrument or to acquire artistic skills,⁵⁶ and the parents' wish that their children take part in "healthy and constructive" leisure activities (p. 56). Children with non-Western background were not underrepresented in the student population. However, although non-Western parents who participated in focus group interviews had positive attitudes towards artistic activities, they turned out to be poorly informed or even misinformed about the culture school activities on offer in their area. One of the major conclusions of the study was indeed that culture schools needed to "improve communication" (p. 93): outside highly educated groups, few parents were aware of what culture schools had to offer, and they did not seem to have much to say about the possible benefits that cultural school attendance might have for their children.

Results from a survey carried out on behalf of the Norwegian Directorate of Education (Bamford, 2011) suggested that culture schools viewed pupil enjoyment and activity as their most important aims; enjoyment being a more important aim than achievement according to 94.9% of the schools surveyed. Some respondents thought that a lack of clarity around the role of the cultural schools had led to a situation where excellence and talent development were neglected. Long waiting lists were mentioned as a problem. Dropout rates were highest among teenagers, who explained that they did not see music school as "cool" and preferred to engage in more self-directed cultural activities. Plans for the future centred around closer collaboration and sharing of expertise between culture schools and kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary education, in

⁵⁶ The question is formulated in a way which indicates that it is the child who has expressed the wish to learn; no distinction is made between parents' and children's wishes.

order to “meet with a wider diversity of pupils and provide a more comprehensive programme that reaches more pupils” (p. 129).⁵⁷

In Denmark, Holst (2013) studied professional knowledge in music education at primary schools and music schools, concluding that the knowledge base differed clearly between these practices: the competence of music school teachers was predominantly subject-based and reflective, whereas primary school teachers seemed better equipped to refer to theoretical general pedagogical knowledge and relate it to their practice. These observations can be compared with the calls for enhanced “pedagogical ability” and “educational attitude” in reports about Finnish music school teaching (Pohjannoro, 2010, 2011). Holst argued that a professional level of teaching competence required at least a degree of integration of the two knowledge bases, and that accordingly, polarisation of competences in study programmes in the two areas had inexpedient consequences for teaching in both types of schools. He suggested that cooperation between the two groups of teachers could balance and improve both competence profiles. Reports from such projects showed that cooperation had resulted in professional development as well as generation of new theory (Holst, 2011, 2012). In another study on music schools, Holst (2014) found that opportunities for students to make music together and take group lessons were of central importance for long-term motivation.

Bamford (2009) included music schools in a report on arts and cultural education in Iceland. According to the study, the music school system enjoyed high status and popularity in the community. The repertoire taught was predominantly classical with a focus on European music, and while group lessons were gaining some ground, the master-apprentice tradition was still strong; 98% of music school directors surveyed thought that individual lessons were very advantageous or rather advantageous. Issues under debate included the contrast between a strong focus on classical music in music schools and the predominance of pop and rock in the Icelandic recording industry; the place of theory lessons within the curriculum; and how collaboration with local schools might best be arranged. According to the report, attendance rates were the highest when the music school was closely connected with the local school and lessons are given during the day; one example cited was a compulsory school in Ísafjörður where 41% of students also attended music school. The Icelandic Musicians’ Union made a statement for the report, defending independence for music schools where the quality of the education was seen as consistently higher

⁵⁷ This might be seen as somewhat paradoxical, given that music schools were already over-subscribed. However, the main rationale built on ideals of equality and accessibility, aiming to secure a more even spread of attendance with regard to gender and socioeconomic status, and to make sure that talented children would have contact with qualified music teachers and not be stuck on waiting lists or hindered by costs of attendance.

than in compulsory schools. The union cautioned that structural reforms might lead to deterioration, as “in some of our neighbouring countries” (p. 42).

Issues and suggestions from music school research in the Nordic countries might be crystallised in the following questions: For whom and for what should music schools exist? What musical, pedagogical and human values should be defended as part of teaching and learning in music schools? How can tensions between tradition and diversity or between specialisation and equal access be worked out? What competencies do teachers need in contemporary music schools? As remarked by Lindgren (2014), a major underlying challenge represented by these questions is how to negotiate the relation between music schools and a changing society. When ideas about what is good and worthwhile in life are challenged, the aims of teaching and learning in music schools are likely to be affected by this larger societal discussion.

Many of the studies reviewed above focus on democracy issues: the right to music school education, the skew in student recruitment that seems connected with socioeconomic factors, and conflicts between what teachers wish to teach (and how) and what students wish to learn. In the following two sections of the chapter, 2.2 and 2.3, I will take a large perspective on what it might be that is actually defended as democratic rights in multiply referenced conversations about the value of music and music education. If music education is a public good, as discussed by Heimonen (2002), how can that good or those goods be understood? I will begin by examining premises for conversations on the subject.

2.2 Music, value, and robust praxialism

Any conception of goodness (the quality of something being good in some sense) in music education is likely to be influenced by notions of what music is, and how its possible value should be understood. A case in point is the prominent and sometimes polarised debate on whether music should primarily be appreciated for its aesthetic properties or approached as a dynamic form of human activity (see e.g. Alperson, 1997, 2011; D. J. Elliott, 2005; Regelski, 2011b; Small, 1998). This study does not specifically endorse or exclude those or any other alternatives. Following Sparshott (1987/1994), I take the word ‘music’ to cover an inherently unstable variety of cultural practices; at best, the word can be used as a heuristic device to provide some orientation in a landscape of diverse and changing meanings. Combining Sparshott’s view with a praxial description of music as a complex set of socially and culturally embedded practices and related, sometimes even conflicting subpractices (Alperson, 1991, 2010b, 2014a), I will refer to music in this larger sense; speaking of ‘musics’ might also have been possible. In choosing a wide notion of music as a background for the research, I wish to acknowledge the remarkable variety of understanding both of the nature of music and of what it is that makes music worthwhile.

Value is attributed to music in different ways and to different degrees across and within cultures, communities, groups and families. These various value attributions are likely to influence the aspirations of music teachers, and unreflected convictions may prove problematic. I shall briefly discuss three examples. First, on the account that certain kinds of music have absolute or *intrinsic value* because of certain properties such as balance, elegance, or coherent unity, the teacher might select musical works that are representative of these properties and train students to identify, analyse, understand, and perhaps also be able to perform and produce such works. The belief that universal, intrinsic harmony might be present in certain musics was well-known to the ancient Greeks. The modern philosophical roots of the notion of intrinsic value can be found in German aesthetic theory developed in the 19th century. In particular, autonomy aesthetics as defended by Hanslick (1854/1986) emphasised contemplation of formal beauty, considered more important than emotion. Other philosophers have seen experience as central: Kant's focus is the sense of fulfilment and harmony when our imagination and capacity for understanding are intensely engaged. In a synthesis of Kantian aesthetic theory and modern emphasis on expressive qualities, Goldman (2005) describes the hallmark of so-called aesthetic experience as "the full exercise of all our sensory, cognitive and affective capacities in the appreciation of works of art" (p. 259). Further, Goldman argues, it is possible to enter a 'world' of music and, for a moment, be detached from one's ordinary life and ordinary world. This feeling is sometimes considered one of the main values of experiences of artworks. The music educator might, then, wish to support students in developing and enhancing their capacities for responding to music in a way that engages the whole person and opens a fascinating parallel world. The idea of cultivating one's humanity through the encounter with great works of art can also be associated with the German concept of *Bildung* (see below, pp. 45–46).

Several objections have been raised against applying the idea of absolute musical value to music education. Autonomy aesthetics may lead students to neglect understandings of how music emerges in cultural contexts and social practices (see e.g. D. J. Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 97). If music's most salient and important value is intrinsic and linked to musical masterworks, it might also be considered demeaning for music education to pursue 'secondary' objectives such as fine motor skills, capacity for teamwork, or ability to focus. But such objectives cannot always be abstracted from musical practices themselves (see below, p. 40). In addition, repertoire as such does not automatically bring value to an educational situation (Westerlund, 2008). Bowman (2005a) points out that valuation based on canon can become mechanical, leading teachers to ground choices of what to teach and how in convictions that are inherited rather than felt as meaningful. In his opinion, there is a tendency to confound subjective musical preferences and associative value with absolute value; a mistake which for him is related to an equally misguided essentialist notion about 'the nature' and 'the value' of 'music' as singular phenomena.

A second possibility is to focus not on ‘absolute’ value in music, but instead on what I will call *consensus-based value*, emerging and cultivated within specific cultures and communities of musical practice. Although this view broadens the perspective on the worthwhile to include a large variety of musical practices and what is considered good within each of them, it also raises new questions for the music educator. Even when there is no question that a particular piece or level of performance is excellent judging by criteria agreed on by practitioners familiar with the genre, the teacher still has to make decisions about when and how to engage with specific repertoire. DeNora (2013) argues that the distinction between ‘goodness in’ and ‘goodness from’ music can dissolve in relation to contextual factors: under some conditions, for example, simple music is ‘better’ than elaborate music, and music at home is ‘better’ than concert music. Bowman (2005a) remarks that “in the wrong hands or under certain circumstances” (p. 126), any music can turn harmful for the student. In addition, values carried by musical practices are not automatically defensible (Bowman, 2005b, p. 73). For example, music can be strongly and stereotypically gendered, or used as a forceful instrument of power. Unexamined, romanticised justifications for musical practices can lead music educators to ignore offensive and harmful aspects that are embedded in the practices themselves (for a more extensive argument, see below, pp. 48–52; similar discussions can also be found in Alperson, 2014a; Philpott, 2012). There is a risk in unexamined beliefs that aiming to initiate students into a musical practice justifies any means that teachers might resort to in their classrooms. And even if there is nothing directly offensive in a musical practice, individual students may be more or less drawn to the particular combination of values and goods associated with it.

Thirdly, it is commonplace to state that the experienced *personal value* of music is related to idiosyncratic meaning. In Green’s words,

No sooner do the first sounds of any music reach our ears, than we begin to assimilate them within a web of meanings in the social world: our past, our future, our friends, family, taste. (Green, 1988, p. 27)

The special value that a particular song may have for a person is not necessarily linked to quality criteria agreed on by practitioners (see e.g. Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2011, p. vi). In addition, the conditions (including education) in which music becomes personally valuable to a person partly resist attempts at predictive systematisation. According to a constructivist model proposed by Lilliestam (2006, pp. 66–67), the reception of music is influenced by the music itself (sound, lyrics, visual codes, behaviours, performers, etc); the person (personal history, cultural affiliation, experiences, knowledge, competence, expectations, prejudice, the mood one is in, relative openness) and the situation (under which circumstances one listens to music: when, where, how, with whom; live or through a recording, in different acoustic conditions, etc). Since all of these factors interact, it cannot be expected that the personal meaning of music is permanent, shared, given once and for all, or unambiguous. According to Green (1988), music invariably has ‘delineated meanings’: content,

references, connotations and significance are related to social contexts, relationships and interaction. Studies from the field of psychoneuroimmunology (see Hanser, 2010) support the everyday observation that music has a powerful impact on human beings, but also that responses to music are influenced by numerous factors such as “preference, familiarity, history, images generated, and memories evoked” (p. 873). Research in cross-cultural psychology and anthropology also suggests that “musical pieces, like performers, are saturated with contextual, social memory” (Trehub, Becker, & Morley, 2015, p. 1).

Even the idea of personal value has limitations as an orienting principle in the everyday work of a music educator. Although it might seem reasonable for teachers to take both their own and students’ preferences into account, other criteria can be needed for decisions about repertoire and activities. For example, the teacher may wish to introduce new experiences, adapt repertoire to the circumstances in which the music will be performed, and exercise judgment about what is appropriate given students’ age, background, or physical abilities.

What music school teachers are possibly grappling with, then, is not a lack of values, but a plethora of values and justifications and their respective consequences for teaching and learning. With no self-evident rules for how to establish value hierarchies there are no automatic answers to the question of what to teach and how. On the surface, this may look like a situation that leads to relativism. However, I will argue that a ‘robust’ praxial approach may encompass and transcend the three ways of attributing value to music discussed above, and also provide some stabilising theoretical support for this study.

The potential of a praxial approach to research in music education

Premises for a philosophical framework which would account for the great variety of musical practices in human life were outlined in essays by Alperson, Sparshott and Wolterstorff in the edited book *What is music?* (Alperson, 1987/1994), and later formulated as a *praxial* view of art in the article *What should one expect from a philosophy of music education?* (Alperson, 1991). Alperson’s early philosophical texts on the subject drew on MacIntyre’s analysis of social practice and conceptualised music as a complex set of socially and culturally embedded practices with multiple subpractices (Alperson, 1987/1994, 1991, pp. 233–234).

The praxial approach was further elaborated on and taken into different directions over the following decades by several music education scholars, most prominently D. J. Elliott (1995, 2005), D. J. Elliott and Silverman (2015), and Regelski (e.g. 1998, 2012). It was also developed in later texts by Alperson (2008, 2010b, 2011).⁵⁸ The authors mentioned disagree on several points and the

⁵⁸ For an extensive overview of the history of the praxial approach, see McCarthy and Goble (2005). For comparisons between views of prominent authors who have discussed a praxial philosophical approach to music education, see Goble (2003) and Bowman (2005b). For recent revisions and expansions of D .J. Elliott’s *Music Matters* from 1995,

term 'praxial' has come to refer to other concerns than the ones originally intended (see Alpers, 2010b, 2011). However, what is widely shared is the view that social, cultural, environmental and educational contexts are important for our understanding of practices of music as well as practices of teaching and learning music. The term 'robust praxialism' suggested in Alpers's later work reflects a concern for inclusiveness and explanatory reach. In this line of thought, music is understood as a myriad of human practices which have their own values, "the specific skills, knowledge, and standards of evaluation appropriate to such practices" (Alpers, 2010b, pp. 182–183). One of the consequences is that it makes little sense to draw hard boundaries between 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' values of music. All kinds of values in music, whether they are referred to as 'intrinsic', 'pragmatic', 'aesthetic', 'extraaesthetic' or something else, are linked to "larger cultural and social significance that has been part of musical practice since antiquity" (Alpers, 2011, p. 621). The praxial approach to music as described by Alpers is

contextual but not relativistic, either in the sense in which it might be thought that no truths about artistic realities can be had or in the sense in which it is claimed that no standards of artistic value can be enunciated (Alpers, 1991, p. 233).

One interesting complication for research in music education is that musical practices do not 'progress' in a linear fashion such that earlier practices become obsolete. Seeking to synthesise the current 'state of the art' make little sense in music.⁵⁹ In discussing social science methodology, Laitin (2006) asserts that "[a] scientific frame would lead us to expect that certain fields will become defunct, certain debates dead, and certain methods antiquated. A pluralism that shelters defunct practitioners cannot be scientifically justified" (p. 54). In music as well as in other art forms, on the contrary, there are 'defunct practitioners' who are 'sheltered', seen as relevant members of the practice, and held in high esteem because of criteria for what is considered admirable within each practice. Praxialism suggests reconstructing music education research as careful inquiry into the many goods that are strived for within the myriad of living practices. The approach acknowledges "deep diversity" (Alpers, 2014b, p. 24) but also encourages critical discussion about the purported goods and possible harms associated with any practice: "relative does not mean arbitrary, and 'many' things does not mean 'just any'" (Bowman, 2005b, p. 63; see also Bowman, 2005c).

Research that builds on the praxial view assumes that in order to examine value in music and music education, we need to proceed through descriptive and

see D. J. Elliott and Silverman (2015). In Finland, the most important trace of the debate on praxialism may be, as Westerlund and Väkevä (2009) suggest, a vigorous interest in the philosophy of music education. The present study can be seen as an example of that trend.

⁵⁹ There is a linguistic paradox in the observation that science and technology may have more reason to refer to the 'state of the art' than the arts.

contextualised study of particular instances (Bowman, 2005b, pp. 55, 72). Alpers (1991) lays out the challenge: “The attempt is made [...] to understand art in terms of the *variety of meaning and values evidenced in actual practice* in particular cultures” (p. 233, emphasis added). Deeper understanding of practices and their development, according to Alpers (2010b), is achieved by attending to “the specific skills, knowledge, and standards of evaluation appropriate to such practices, *however various they turn out to be*” (p. 183, emphasis added). Attempting to understand teaching practices in music also involves a striving to understand what is considered important in the cultures and traditions under study, both in terms of musical qualities and in terms of the skills and personal capabilities that are considered valuable (Naqvi, 2012, pp. 181, 189).⁶⁰

As Alpers’s analyses have shown, musical practices enshrine a remarkable variety of values and aims. This central observation opens interesting perspectives on the kinds of conversations that music education affords. For the researcher, practices and strategies in music education may offer a window on beliefs about goodness and how it is sought and thought to be constituted in musical teaching and learning. In institutions such as music schools, where historical and contemporary practices live side by side, “robust” (thoroughgoing) praxialism seems to have a good potential to support understanding of aspirations and challenges of teacher practice, and help both teachers and researchers to construct questions about teaching and learning that are simultaneously practical, philosophical and ethical.

2.3 Music education and the good life

The value of music for bringing up children and young people has been debated throughout recorded history of education in the West. It is unhelpful, I argue, to understand deliberation about the aims and practices of music school teaching and learning only as parochial processes of decision-making according to local preferences or budgets. As the review on research about Nordic music schools already suggests, it is possible to distinguish larger cultural, historical, and philosophical discussions in policy and practice. The following section of the chapter will provide a wide perspective on some of the major ideas that may be involved. In order to construct a provisional, heuristic map of how music education has been thought to contribute to goodness in human life, I will first attempt to establish points of reference with the help of more general philosophical notions. I shall then review and discuss certain ideas about the ‘good’, ‘valuable’ and ‘worthwhile’ in music education.

Classical philosophical ideas of goodness place human well-being at the centre of discussions, although there is disagreement about how well-being should be

⁶⁰ In *Teaching practices in Persian art music*, Naqvi (2012) demonstrates how careful analysis of an instructional practice enhances understanding not only of the practice itself but also of how concepts are used and valued differently in different cultural contexts.

defined and how to reach it. For Plato and Aristotle, the highest good in life is human flourishing or *eudaimonia*, which in turn is dependent on necessary dispositions and skills associated with virtue. The meaning of the ancient Greek word for virtue, *aretē*, started to fluctuate already in Plato's lifetime, but as a human attribute it is often translated as 'excellence': demonstrating skill, acumen and wit in whatever one undertakes, in accordance with one's ability and responsibilities in life. In order to live a flourishing life built on virtue, it is necessary to develop the faculty of recognising true virtue and beauty: to enjoy the right things and activities for the right reasons. Approaches to music are grounded in this conviction in both Plato's and Aristotle's writings.

The Aristotelian "focal strategy" (see Wiggins, 2009) of ordering values around the central case of the faring well of a human being is reflected in many later theories of well-being in Western philosophy. In the work of Raz (1986), it is called the "humanistic principle": "the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality" (p. 194). In Western philosophy literature, lists of values in human life tend to be set out so that there is a distinction between moral values and nonmoral values (see Frankena, 1973); the latter often including categories such as utilitarian values (favouring some purpose), hedonistic values (associated with pleasure and happiness), the beneficial (that which is good 'for' a human being, protection from harm), "medical" values (health),⁶¹ social values (friendship, love, caring, affection), and aesthetic values (beauty, art). All of these values, distinct or combined, have been associated with music education. Often, a distinction is made between intrinsic and extrinsic values; that is, values that are seen as ends in themselves, and values that are means for attaining other, higher-order values; this separation has been hotly debated in the philosophy of music education (see below, pp. 49–50).

The assertion that there are particular, important values related to childhood represents the core of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The idea is present in the work of many international and Finnish educational theorists (e.g. Dewey, 1902/1976; Key, 1900/1996; Ruismäki & Juvonen, 2011; Väri, 1997), who point out that although education is concerned with the future of children and young people, it is primordial not to lose sight of a more immediate perspective; the good life as it is lived in childhood. In music education, Westerlund (2008) has made this point from a Deweyan perspective in an article with the title *Justifying music education: A view from here-and-now value experience*, arguing that what music teachers do should be valuable both "in and for the processes in which learners grow" (p. 88).

Basing inquiry on music school teaching on philosophical discussions about values and goods is not easy, and may even be seen as irrelevant. After all, one

⁶¹ In von Wright (1963, pp. 51–62).

might argue, music teachers' main task must be to transmit musical skills. But as evidenced by accounts of musical practices from many different cultures and genres, references to value and meaning are often embedded in the traditions and practices themselves.⁶² For example, jazz improvisation involves certain protocols which define musical as well as social values and meanings (Alperson, 2010a). Without denying that competitive, exclusionary, and even aggressive jazz traditions exist, Alperson points out that practices in jazz often contain social codes and "tacit courtesies" (p. 277) such as dividing solos fairly, building on what the other musicians have contributed, and honouring both present and absent members of the jazz community. Improvisational activity, Alperson (2010a) argues, also includes an implicit reference to human freedom. Higgins (1991), quoted by Alperson, even asserts that musical improvisation provides "an example of a musical model for ethics with respect to the interaction of individual and group, or minority and majority populations in a community" (p. 7). Another example is the culture of digital music making, where loyalty to musical traditions is seen as less important than peer networks, friendships, "cultural and creative fluidity" and the cosmopolitan "ability to travel through as well as *between* different musical communities, seizing and passing on ideas, styles and interests from one practice to another" (Parti, 2012, pp. 76, 131).

Music school teachers, then, will tend not only to represent their musical skills, but also values and aspirations associated with their practices. Willingly or not, they embody ways of life and ways of interpreting the world. They exert influence as citizens in the public arena and as important adults in young people's lives. The particular 'flavour' or texture of the combination of music school teachers' aspirations will constitute part of the musical and social world in which their students grow and develop.

How can music education contribute to goodness in life?

In this section, as a background for understanding of the 'varieties of goodness' that music school teachers may seek to accomplish in their work, I will propose a heuristic map of how it has been thought that music education and goodness are connected. The ambition here is to provide a synthesis which is reasonably comprehensive, but being exhaustive is impossible; neither is the purpose to identify the 'best' way in which music education can contribute to goodness in the life of children and young people. The aim, rather, is to display the variety of thought on the subject. Preconceived categories increase the risk of structuring interpretation prematurely, imposing a deductive research approach, and limiting the perspectives that the data afford. The ideas presented should therefore be understood as nonhierarchical, fuzzy rather than clear-cut, and related to each other in a number of intricate ways that will be discussed throughout the study. There will be additions and nuances following data analysis and interpretation;

⁶² Musical performances, Trehub et al (2015) write, are "socially and culturally situated" as well as "ethically saturated" (p. 2).

the intention here is to develop “educated provisional inferences that will be considered and explored” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 53). Already at the end of this section, I will examine some problematic aspects of the thoughts included in the categories.

In brief, music education has been thought to contribute to the good in a child’s or young person’s life by

1. providing access to musical experience, expression, appreciation, and active participation;
2. enhancing personal happiness and promoting a well-lived life;
3. being beneficial for a) individual development, b) the interrelationships between the person and her or his family, peers, and community, c) the society in which the person lives;
4. attending to central and/or existential issues in human life.

These ideas will be addressed in more depth below, with the intention to survey and group some beliefs that have been defended in Western philosophical traditions or by authors who have engaged in music education advocacy, and to note similarities between this heritage and suggestions from studies across cultural, social and cognitive sciences.

Access to musical experience, expression, and active participation

In the Western world, music has long been considered a natural phenomenon and, for that reason, also a natural part of human existence. Music and music education seem to have “species-wide omnipresence”, Welch (2005) notes; human beings seem to be musical by their biological design, and informal music education starts before birth and continues throughout encultured experience (p. 117). A recent cross-cultural and interdisciplinary (psychology, musicology, anthropology) review of research on music and musicality suggests that music is an inextricable part of both human nature and culture: it is “universal, transmitted through generations, usually performed in the presence of others, and of extreme antiquity” (Trehub et al, 2015, p. 1).

What is perceived, expressed and shared in music is referred to variously as feelings, emotions, ideas, the self, attachment, relationships, beauty, harmony, aesthetic experience,⁶³ a particular kind of human thought and knowledge, wisdom, fantasies, or spiritual experience. The ancient Greeks believed that some music reflected the underlying principles of the universe and could help human beings to understand and align with cosmic mathematical and moral harmony.⁶⁴ Similar thoughts were developed by the Roman philosopher

⁶³ Aesthetic experience is understood here as related not just to beauty, but to sense experience in general (see Väkevä, 2012).

⁶⁴ The Greek word *mousiké* does not correspond with what is thought of as music in the contemporary Western world. It was used in a number of contexts including all the arts

Boethius and by medieval Christian thinkers (Alperson, 2014b). The 17th century educational philosopher Comenius observed in his famous *Didactica Magna* that children “delight in music” and therefore recommended that they should be “indulged in [music], so that their ears and minds may be soothed by concord and harmony” (in Monroe, 1896, p. 48). In modernity, attention was directed from universal order to the relation between music and the human ‘inner life’, the mind’s sensitivity to beauty, and how such sensitivity might be cultivated (see Väkevä, 2012, p. 92). From the 18th century, after Rousseau, several child-centred educational thinkers showed interest in music education. For example, Fröbel (1826) noted that children seem to have a particular need for expressing their inner lives through movement, rhythm and singing; this natural tendency, he believed, should be encouraged and channelled into social and educational activity (Varkøy, 1996).

Contemporary psychological studies suggest, similarly, that most children seem to show an innate desire for musical expressivity (e.g. Trevarthen & Malloch, 2012). In everyday talk, music is often referred to as a language beyond words.⁶⁵ The analogy is based on symbolic ways in which music becomes meaningful, particularly through experience, and on the observation that music can have communicative functions. Referring to research on communicative musicality and implications of neurosciences and brain research for music education, Welch and McPherson (2012) state that musical communication and interaction is part of human neurobiological functioning, a “birthright” which needs to be nurtured in order to reach full flourishing (p. 6).

Whether music is foremostly regarded as a natural or social phenomenon, a form of art, ‘fine’ art, craft, or a means of transmission and transformation of culture, values and knowledge (see Alperson, 2011), it is central to many important aspects and moments of human life. Therefore, many educators have thought that children should have a positive right to musical experience and learning which allows them to take active part in the musical practices of their culture (e.g. McCarthy, 2009; Regelski, 1998, 2012). Acquiring musical knowledge and skill can enhance appreciation but also foster critical discernment and provide guidance in the world of music, raise awareness of manipulative uses of music,

of the muses, including poetry, drama, and even the state of inspiration itself. It also had connections with science, mathematics and philosophy, and all the ways in which human beings could expect to get a glimpse of cosmic harmony. Plato in particular was convinced that *mousiké* had far-reaching moral, social and political effects (see e.g. Bowman, 1998); similar beliefs about music have been very influential in China (see Wang, 2004, 2012),

⁶⁵ Opinions differ as to whether this is a helpful analogy or if it leads to misunderstandings such as believing that there are nonambiguous semantic or semiotic meanings in music (see e.g. Kivy, 2007, pp. 137–232). If music is a form of ‘language’, it also becomes logical to discuss whether it should be considered universal or intracultural, or both. For a neuroscientific view on music and language as a continuum, see Koelsch (2012, pp. 244–249).

and allow for more conscious choices and personal ways of enjoying and participating in musical activities (see e.g. Koopman, 2005, pp. 89–96). Far from being the privilege of a particularly ‘musical’ elite, music should be considered a democratic right with a democratic purpose, according to e.g. Väkevä and Westerlund (2007) or Woodford (2005).

Personal happiness, well-being, and a well-lived life

Throughout the history of Western music education, prevailing thoughts about what happiness is and what promotes it have quite naturally influenced ideas about how learning music may contribute to personal happiness. The matter is further complicated by the various uses of the word ‘happiness’: as referring to subjective, psychological states of mind, or as referring to beliefs about what constitutes happiness; most predominantly the idea of a good, flourishing life. In writings about music and personal happiness, both versions occur, whether as distinctive, combined, related, or overlapping. Observations and suggestions often bear resemblance with two key ideas found already in ancient Greek philosophy: first, that music provides natural pleasure and eases suffering and tension; second, that music promotes happiness by focusing our attention on the best and most important things in life.

In views inspired by the ancient Greek tradition, personal happiness is best enhanced by cultivating the taste, sensitivity, cognitive capacity and wisdom to be able to distinguish, appreciate and prefer the most worthwhile things in life, both in terms of virtue and in terms of aesthetic qualities.⁶⁶ The influence of classical thought is present in the idea that the aim of music education is to train connoisseurs who are able “to discern the goodness in the music” (Broudy, 1958, p. 68). Suzuki (1983), famous founder of the Suzuki method of teaching music, stated as his main concern that people should get to know the “true joys” in life and learn to “make something good of their lives” through looking for “love, truth, virtue, and beauty”; thus, the purpose of music education is not only to develop excellent musicianship, but to become “a noble human being” (pp. ix–x).

Music’s general restorative and therapeutic capacities as well as its ability to influence and balance the emotions have also been noted and discussed in the West at least since ancient Greece, and can help understand the religious belief that music is a gift from the gods, or one god. Aristotle stated that that one of the reasons that music should be included in education was that it produces cheerfulness and provides distraction from worries (*Politics*, 1339a10–11). These observations have support in cognitive and behavioural neuroscience

⁶⁶ According to Plato (*The Republic*, III), being able to perceive beauty in music will later help the young person to recognise beauty of the soul. Aristotle asserts that if a young person experiences enthusiasm about the right kind of music, that is, music which imitates and evokes desirable dispositions, the enjoyment itself helps shape character (*Politics*, 1339b42).

which has produced a wealth of studies of the therapeutic uses of music, links between music and pleasure (an overview can be found in Koelsch, 2010), links between music and well-being (for a comprehensive overview, see the edited volume by Macdonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012),⁶⁷ and the capacity of human beings to regulate their emotions with the help of music (e.g. Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008; Saarikallio, 2011; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

One important, recurring theme in texts about how music contributes to personal happiness is the observation that music can create feelings of being intensely alive. For example, music educator and choir conductor William Tomlins (cited in Birge, 1939, p. 155), criticising American general education around 1900, argued that an overemphasis on knowledge leads to the neglect of important aspects of the child's other "powers": "Make him alive in his inner and innermost being, and soon he will pulse with the great world-life all about him, soon he will be filled with the joy of living" (p. 110). Similar ideas can be found in the 'muse-ical' (German: *musisch*) movement in Germany and Scandinavia in the second half of the 20th century (Bjørkvold, 1992). Here, in reaction to an overrational, overintellectualised, overutilitarian society, other values are defended: free time, joy, spontaneity, children's culture, play, games, creativity, friendships, and "the voice of the heart" (Varkøy, 1996, p. 61).

Contemporary cross-disciplinary studies involving music psychology, child psychology and neuropsychology have suggested that musical expression can be understood as an innate way of "communicating the vitality and interests of life" (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 1).⁶⁸ Seen from this perspective, music does not necessarily function as an instrumental means to an end (happiness), but can be seen as a particular way or dimension of living which may open the way to experiences of art and provide relief from the constant toil of the factual, the useful, and the inevitable.⁶⁹

Benefits for the individual, the community, and society

For the *development of the individual*, music education has been thought to promote not only musical skill but also psychological, physical, moral, intellectual and social capabilities (Bowman, 2012a; Hallam, 2010). However, if the task of music education is to support the development of 'favourable' traits and capabilities, what is favourable needs to be understood in a historical, cultural and societal context. Plato's ideal is the young man who is neither too gentle nor too tough, and the role of music is to contribute to the formation of a well-balanced character. Religious music traditions have focused on ideals of

⁶⁷ Part of the happiness associated with music-making can possibly be explained by its social dimensions. Many studies have suggested that social connectedness is central for well-being (see Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011; but cf. Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010).

⁶⁸ See also Stern (2010).

⁶⁹ See also Sparshott (1987/1994, p. 89).

their own; to take an example relevant to Finnish religious history, Luther (cited in Painter, 1889/2001) states that music is a powerful “antidote against temptation and evil thoughts” and makes men [sic] “more modest and discreet” (p. 165). The more recent ideal of a person whose well-rounded education has involved all the senses can be found in the writings of many educational scholars from the 19th and 20th centuries. For Pestalozzi and Fröbel, music is one key to cultivating the ‘heart’ and, together with all the arts, central to a full development that takes all sides of human nature into account (Varkøy, 1996). Similar thoughts have been widely expressed in Nordic curricula. In the Finnish national curriculum for basic education in the arts, humanistic and moral dimensions of education come together in the central aim that teaching and learning should create “foundations for emotional, aesthetic and ethical development” (FNBE, 2002). In approaches to music education where learning through body movement is seen as central, one purpose is to make positive changes in the way the human body functions, experiences music, and ‘knows’. For example, in Dalcroze eurhythmics, the aim is to “reinforce the mind-body connection and facilitate personified, holistic involvement and, thus, embodied learning” (Juntunen, 2004, p. 80). Aims clearly connected with subjectively felt states and personal development are expressed in, for instance, the assertion by D. J. Elliott and Silverman (2015) that musicing gives access to “self-growth, self-knowledge”, and “optimal experience” (p. 379).

From the perspective of benefits of music education on individual development, the idea of *Bildung* represents an important and influential strand of thought, particularly as distinguished from education or upbringing.⁷⁰ As a concept, *Bildung* is complex and difficult to translate (see footnote 70, below). It carries several different meanings, more or less related to the full formation of one’s humanity through knowledge, intellectual development, moral reflection, and cultivation of faculties that are needed in order to live well. As understood in the German tradition developed in the 1700s and 1800s and represented most prominently by Humboldt, *Bildung* refers to self-development towards forms of individual freedom and autonomy which ultimately benefit the community (see Espagne, 2014). This process is made possible through a symbolical journey from the everyday, well-known home-ground towards the new and unknown

⁷⁰ The concept of *Bildung* is originally German and has its roots in the religious thought that human beings are created in the image (*Bild*) of God and go through development processes in order for this resemblance to become manifest. Later, humanistic understandings of *Bildung* have emphasised full development as a human being. The term *Bildung* differs from the term for education, *Erziehung*. In Finnish, there is a distinction between the corresponding term, *sivistys*, and other terms related to education, such as *koulutus* (education or training; the word includes the noun *koulu*, meaning school) and *kasvatus* (upbringing or education; the word includes the verb *kasvaa*, meaning ‘to grow’). In Swedish, there is a distinction between *bildning* and *utbildning*, the former corresponding largely to the German concept of *Bildung*; the latter usually referring to professional training. See Varkøy (2008) and Heimonen (2014) for more elaborate discussions of *Bildung* in the context of music education.

(see e.g. Varkøy, 2008; Pio, 2008). The cultured (*bildet*) person returns ‘home’ as a more open, all-encompassing, wise individual; more open to humanity, capable of seeing himself or herself and others with new eyes. One important prerequisite for Bildung is exposure to cultural heritage, which provides strong experiences in the form of great works of art, including music, and where flamboyant role models, both artistic and literary, can be found. A contemporary interpretation of Bildung in music education is offered by Varkøy (2008), who remarks that the unknown extends beyond one’s ‘own’ cultural or professional heritage towards other cultures and disciplines; new encounters allow for expanded and critical thinking. These strong and potentially transformative development processes are personal, but also intersubjective: Bildung as a meeting with humanity helps both individuals and their societies to change their ways of being and to distinguish between important and unimportant things in life (pp. 88–89).

Since the mid-20th century, there has been a growing interest in what music can do for cognitive development. By the late 1990s, new spark was added to these discussions as neuroscientific research provided powerful claims about the roles that music seems to play in the functioning of the brain. One key hypothesis in this field of research is that abilities developed through engagement with music (such as enhanced working memory, self-discipline, good working habits, and concentration) may transfer to other areas and therefore benefit the individual in numerous ways, notably through academic attainment. Although relationships may be correlational rather than causal and findings need to be interpreted with caution (see e.g. Mosing, Madison, Pedersen, & Ullén, 2015), some studies seem to suggest that music education can have a positive impact on perception and attention, sequence learning, long-term memory, fine motor coordination, literacy, language acquisition, certain aspects of numeracy, and also areas such as health, well-being, emotion regulation and emotional development, and social skills (see e.g. reviews by Hallam, 2010; Huotilainen, 2010; Koelsch, 2012; cf. Schellenberg & Weiss, 2013).

With regard to *interrelationships*, many authors have highlighted the prosocial consequences of music and its potential to create bonds and strengthen attachment (e.g. Boer & Abubakar, 2014; Dissanayake, 2000; Gratier & Apter-Danon, 2009; Powers & Trevarthen, 2009), to form personal and cultural identities (e.g. MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002), to improve schools and other social environments (e.g. Rusinek, 2008; Welch, 2005), and to socialise the individual into the values of his or her family, group, school, community, or society (e.g. Bjørnstad & Espeland, 2011; Ho, 2011).

Building on a positive youth development framework, O’Neill (2006) argues that both character development and musical development are “intertwined with connections that young people have with significant people in their lives” (p. 469). Music is part of caregiving across cultures (Trehub et al, 2015) and can facilitate the development of friendship (Pitts, 2007). Cross, Laurence and

Rabinowich (2012) have found that long-term musical group interaction can have a positive influence on empathy in children. Beyond immediate family and peer relations, music can be understood as a symbolic link to the past, transmitting memories, culture, values and musical knowledge from one generation to another (Jorgensen, 1997, pp. 77–81).

Benefits for society are often connected with music's power to unify, strengthen and preserve community and collective identity. Assertions about the benefits for society can be found already in Plato (*The Republic, III*), who believed that music education could guard against criminality and promote societal orderliness. Similar thoughts about the societal benefits of teaching morality and obedience through music have been important background influences in music education worldwide (see e.g. Cox, 2011; Ogawa, 2011; Stevens & Southcott, 2011).

Related to the idea that music has intrinsic value, keeping musical traditions alive and available in society has also been seen as important. In addition to artistic value, music is considered to be a part of living history, telling the story of societies and civilisations, thereby connecting the members of a society to its traditions and cultural heritage (see e.g. Frith, 1996b; Grant, 2014) but also affording the possibility to tell and retell the narratives of the community (Karlsen, 2007, p. 186).

In many countries, including Finland, music education has had a strong connection with patriotism and nationalism (see Cox, 2011; Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012; on Finland, especially Heimonen & Hebert, 2012).⁷¹ Music has been thought to help young people strive for excellence and to foster creativity and innovativity, which may in turn improve work force productivity and national competitiveness. Economic benefits are sometimes mentioned, either from returns on cultural investment or tax revenues from the music industry, or from cost reduction through music's potential to promote health and well-being and prevent socioeconomic problems. With reference to Putnam (2000), Louhivuori (2009) advances the opportunity for constructing 'social capital' as one important societal benefit of choir singing or other music-making in groups (p. 19).

Beyond the interests of nations and local societies, music has also been thought to promote 'intercultural understanding', as expressed in the mission statement of the International Society of Music Education in 2015: "The richness and diversity of the world's music provides opportunities for intercultural learning and international understanding, co-operation and peace".⁷² Promoting democratic ideals is possible through forms of music education that respect a

⁷¹ The agenda of Finnish music schools has been particularly influenced by patriotism, see e.g. Perälä (1993). See also 2.4.

⁷² *ISME core values*. <http://www.isme.org/general-information/29-isme-vision-and-mission>

plurality of values, strive for equal opportunity and access, help close achievement gaps, and have explicit agendas of social justice, according to e.g. Gould, Countryman, Morton, and Rose (2009); see also Benedict, Schmidt, Spruce, and Woodford (in press).

Focusing on central/existential life issues

Music is thought to have a role in *attending to central issues in human life* such as belonging, meaning of life, quality of life, and existential, religious or spiritual beliefs. Dissanayake (1988, 1992) illustrates this aspect as she defines one function of the arts as their capacity of “making special” or “artifying” an “event, place, utterance, sound, movement, or idea” (Dissanayake, 2013, p. 86). In life situations from early parent-child interaction to liminal rites and moments that are so rife with complex and symbolic meaning that they might become overwhelming, the presence of music can help express the depth of human experience and affirm dignity. The (not unproblematic) links between music, education and religion are also strong across cultures, beliefs, and doctrines (Alperson, 2014a).

From a secular perspective on music education, Swanwick (1988) has stated that the “special function” of the arts is “to make life worth living, more ‘like life’” (p. 50). Gioia (2006/2008) suggests that the arts, including music, make their greatest contribution to human life through the way in which they can enable “awakening to the full potential of what your life might be” (p. 52). Reimer (1995) has written about experiences of transcendence in music education. Jorgensen (1993) has examined music education through Tillich’s (1959/1987) theory of “ultimate experience” in the arts.

When music is accompanied by strong associations to good experiences and relationships, it can evoke and strengthen feelings of relatedness and being understood. In this sense, music may even be experienced symbolically as a friend or a parent (Kurkela, 1993; Wärja, 1999), provide comfort, and have particular importance in moments of distress. Writing during World War II, Mursell (1943) pointed out that especially in difficult times, music educators need to represent hope; music is a reminder that there still is goodness in life. A number of music education scholars have explored the idea of ‘healing’ through music (for an overview and critical discussion, see Jorgensen, 2011, pp. 131–150).

Good for what, according to whom?

In the previous section, I have attempted to expose at least a part of the “varieties of goodness” (borrowing the expression from von Wright, 1963) which philosophers, music educators, researchers and policy makers have thought that music education can promote. I will now turn to the debate about problematic implications of these various ideas, with an eye to the uncompromising question formulated by DeNora (2013): “Goodness for whom, what, how, when, where, why and according to whom?” (p. 131).

Seen as a long historical discussion beginning with Plato and currently including research in “neuro-pedagogy” (Hodges & Gruhn, 2012), argumentation about the value of music education appears to have been pendulum-like over the centuries. The idea that music learning should serve more general educational goals has periodically given way to self-justifying musical priorities, perhaps out of impatience with a perceived neglect of artistic or aesthetic values as opposed to utilitarian values. Later, the pendulum has swung back to powerful claims about the manifold functions of music evidenced by brain research. The core question of the debate seems to be what the focus of musical teaching and learning should be. Or, one might ask, should there be one singular, universal focus?

The debate about building advocacy for music on ‘extramusical’ benefits has sometimes been intense, probably in part because of music’s vulnerable position in the curriculum in many countries. Several music educators (e.g. Bowman, 2005c; Bresler, 2002a) have warned that compensatory moves such as overconfident, oversimplified or even “grandiose” (Reimer, 2005) claims about transfer effects may harm rather than support music education. Emphasising the humanist character of music education, Varkøy (2007) has argued strongly against the “instrumental fallacy”, warning about problems that ensue from treating musical learning as ‘production’ and the learner as a ‘product’ (for example, a useful citizen).

The ways in which individuals and institutions decide on their hierarchies of value are often influenced by prevailing ideologies in society. Music can be instrumentalised in the interest of institutions of power, and ranking of benefits can be turned against internal musical goods, which is one main reason for the strong critique of ‘instrumental’ value articulated by Varkøy and others. Conversely, a common distinction is to consider music in itself as a more worthy end, whereas other benefits of music-making, such as well-being or developing cognitive skills, are seen as less important. Westerlund (2008) remarks that a consequence of a rigid dichotomy of ends and means can be that the means to achieve valued ends will be considered as secondary in importance in absolute terms: “Since the causes of an end are only means and not the finalities with intrinsic value, they are of less value” (p. 81). For example, if “friendship groups” are helpful in informal music learning, as argued by Green (2008), should music educators consider friendship important mainly as an instrumental means to musical ends? Even composing, playing an instrument or singing may be seen as a secondary means to the primary end of attaining a more sophisticated level of musical appreciation.

It has been pointed out that music can serve as a device of social ordering (DeNora, 2000) and a way of preserving and gaining social capital for those who can afford tuition, thus hardening class structures (see e.g. Froehlich, 2007b, pp. 83–87). On the other hand, Hofvander Trulsson (2010) has shown that high-status Western classical music is sometimes used as a means of social mobility

for members of underprivileged or stigmatised groups; taking children to music lessons can be a parental strategy for attaining ‘correct’ socialisation and thus investing in the children’s future (p. 207). Further complexity is introduced, as observed by Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg and Graabræk Nielsen (2014), by the fact that members of the higher social classes now like to see themselves as “culturally omnivorous”, whereby music that has so far enjoyed limited social status, such as popular music, now becomes “gentrified” (p. 31). Teachers can unwittingly become instruments in these complicated processes of social ordering and of gaining access to recognition, whether outcomes are experienced as positive or not by students, parents, and the teachers themselves.

Serious objections have been raised against the idea that music in and by itself develops understanding about human emotional life and deepens our empathy and our relationships with other human beings. One example is the problem of the “evil aesthete”: no art has yet been able to warrant the development of such unflinching empathy that cruelty and atrocities can be avoided (Scruton, 2007, pp. 41–43). Instead of promoting ‘intercultural understanding’ and empathy, music can be used as propaganda, promote racism or sexism, fuel antagonism, and glorify violence. Overall, there are good reasons to doubt the belief that music invariably represents goodness and that as a consequence, music education is always benign. In *Dark side of the tune: Popular music and violence*, Johnson and Cloonan (2008) have contributed thought-provoking accounts of musical practices and uses of music and musical lyrics which fall squarely outside of the goodness discourse. Spychiger (2011) and Kertz-Welzel (2011) have written eloquently about instances of “Kitsch” in music education, giving examples of how idealistic (or desperate) music teachers may succumb to sentimental, simplistic, “too beautiful” aims such as entire transformation of human beings, creation of perfect harmony, and the achievement of lasting world peace.

As testified by students whose music lessons have been mostly painful and humiliating, music education is not always empowering: some people, Welch and McPherson (2012) point out, “report negative experiences that live with them throughout their lives” (p. 17). In the case of Finnish music schools and conservatoires, one particularly distressing account by Lehtonen (2004) gave voice to former students who described strong anxiety related to lessons, public performances and achievement level; oppressive atmospheres; “caste systems” where students were treated differently depending on how talented they were considered to be; and an unsaid rule of “get results or get out” (p. 54).⁷³

In “aesthetic activity” as well as in sports or science, Frankena (1973) has argued, it is necessary to find a balance between pleasure or enjoyment, without which knowledge and excellence may be experienced as cold and meaningless, and at least some striving for excellence, without which activities and

⁷³ In Finnish, there is a cruel rhyme to the rule: *tulos tai ulos*.

experiences are not entirely satisfactory (p. 91). In music, searching for extraordinary achievement does not always seem to be a major priority; many music educators have championed the idea of music for all (see e.g. Pitts, 2012; Welch, 2005), asserting that what is most important is to nourish everyone's potential. After following the lives of over 150 children in Australia for fourteen years, McPherson, Davidson and Faulkner (2012) found no correlation between high level of skill and subjectively perceived richness and fulfilment in the musical lives of the participants in their study. 'Enjoyment' and 'having fun', in contrast, were found to be key predictors of long-term, ongoing engagement with music.

The heuristic map developed above should not be understood as representing clear-cut boundaries between the individual and the social, or the view that what is good for the individual will invariably and reciprocally correspond with what is good for society. In confined, abusive, destructive, or tyrannical social systems, escaping strong socialisation and being able to resist shared ideas may be more important than promoting harmony and unity. There are many examples of music being used to counter oppression and promote emancipation, whether as large-scale protest or in the creation of personal 'free zones' where musical activity makes it possible for individuals and communities to flourish beyond determinist cultural expectations and confining identities. Many contemporary music education scholars (e.g. Karlsen, 2011; Karlsen & Väkevä, 2012; Rikandi, 2012) emphasise the emancipatory potential of music education through the development of critical agency.

At the level of the individual, what is ultimately 'beneficial' about music education is contingent on a larger set of circumstances. Concluding that there is indeed a case for the benefits of music throughout the lifespan in a number of domains, Hallam (2010) points out that while engagement with music can have positive effects on social and personal development, the sense that personal change is beneficial depends largely on whether participating in music has been found enjoyable and rewarding, with achievable aspirations (p. 280). In addition, effects and benefits are not necessarily the same thing: music 'works' when a child with disabilities makes important progress thanks to a musical intervention programme, but also when young persons engage with certain musics to avoid being bullied by their peers, or use music to numb down feelings in order to silently bear painful situations which could be remedied.

Among many music education scholars who have argued strongly for pluralism, Westerlund (2002) defends music education that acknowledges and promotes the "multiplicity of ways in which to make life musical" and the "variety of 'good' ways to make education musical and music educational" (p. 15), a formulation close to von Wright's "varieties of goodness" (1963). In order to make choices about how music might contribute to the good life, then, music school teachers must have knowledge of the alternatives (see Heimonen, 2002, p. 137). Similarly, Mollenhauer (1983/2014) asserts that adults need to ask questions

about what way of life ought to be presented and systematically represented to children. The question of how music school teaching and learning can contribute to the good life does not relate solely to a good life in general terms, but to the good life of children and young people; and further, the good life of *this* child or *this* young person. There need not automatically be a conflict between individualisation and promoting more general values (although tensions are of course possible); as in any decisions regarding the best interests of any child, both aspects need to be taken into serious consideration. This task opens for the dialogue between students, parents and teachers that has been called for in the context of Finnish music schools, and emphasises the ethical responsibility inherent in the work of teachers.

2.4 Finnish music school policy

In the previous sections I have examined different values and goods related to ontologies of music and musical practices themselves and values and goods which it has been thought that music education should promote. Conceptions of the worthwhile and the good life tend to vary to some extent from culture to culture. Given the Finnish context of this study, I will attempt in this section to arrive at a more fine-grained map of the value basis of Finnish music school policy. First, I will review some of the philosophical tendencies behind educational ideologies in Finland. Then, I will discuss the national core curricula for Finnish music schools both in terms of their place in the music school system and in terms of the values, skills, attitudes and personal characteristics that are emphasised as important in the texts.

Educational thought on values in Finnish education

Värri (2011) identifies three main historical tendencies behind educational ideologies in Finland: the national state ethos, inspired by Hegelian thought, from the build-up towards Finland's independence, starting in the 1860s and culminating with the declaration of independence in 1917, and until the end of World War II; the rise of the Nordic-style welfare state after the war; and since the 1950s, strivings to build a globally competitive nation (p. 49). The two first tendencies were also influenced by religious values, in particular Lutheran Protestantism,⁷⁴ whereas the third tendency built on liberalist, secularised thought.

After the 1950s, Finnish society has seen a growing emphasis on secular, pluralist, and individualist values. According to Launonen (2000), at least two main turning points can be identified in the history of educational values in

⁷⁴ Although Finnish society is increasingly secularised, the Lutheran church has had a central historical role through its position as a collective and compulsory state-run church until 1869, and since 1919 as the larger of two recognised national churches; the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland (Sakaranaho, 2013).

Finland, representing shifts from ethical objectivism to ethical constructivism, and further, to subjectivism. The first turning point is represented by the second elementary school curriculum (1952), where ethical conceptions were separated from religious conceptions, turning instead towards national culture and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The second was the introduction (in 1972) of a compulsory, egalitarian, 9-year comprehensive school, with a curriculum emphasising the individual's right to make value choices within a framework of global ethics and sustainability.

In a study on ethical thinking in texts related to Finnish school education, Launonen (2000) observed that some educational ideals have fluctuated or disappeared, whereas others seem to have remained relatively stable. Character virtues such as self-discipline, altruism, and living a simple, unselfish life were especially connected with the early decades of independence, periods of war, and the rebuilding of the country in the 1940s. Gradually, values of society and social interaction gained more ground. In the 1990s, schools emphasised civic responsibility, a strong sense of self, and healthy self-esteem. The set of moral ideals that seem to have remained constant during the period studied by Launonen (1863 to 1999) are connected with honesty, diligence, work, fairness and courtesy. The educational ideal, then, would be to foster fair, hard-working individuals, who also master the social skills necessary to succeed in life.

Saari, Salmela and Vilkkilä (2014) consider child-centredness, individuality, effectiveness, and scientific knowledge as the main, enduring educational discourses in the past decades in Finland. Each individual should have a right to pursue his or her aspirations in accordance with personal capacities. Since the 1980s, the authors argue, equality and autonomy in education has increasingly begun to stand for individual (or parental) choice, which brings the concepts closer to market logic and consumerist values. However, the underlying values of compulsory basic education, as stated in the most recent national core curriculum (FNBE, 2014) emphasise the classical triad “truth, goodness and beauty” as well as “justice and peace”, “respect for life and human rights”, “well-being, democracy and active participation in civil society” and “equality”. Basic education is expected to “support the cultural identities” of all students, encourage “participation in cultural and social communities” as well as “an interest in other cultures”, and “reinforced appreciation for creativity and cultural diversity” which provides “the foundation for world citizenship”. Sustainable lifestyles should be reflected on and promoted, notably in connection with modes of consumption and production (pp. 15–16).

Basic education in Finland, according to the national curriculum, builds on the conviction that childhood has intrinsic value (FNBE, 2014, p. 15). Several Finnish educational philosophers, among them Värri (1997, 2011) have pointed out that concern for the child's security and well-being should always be of primary importance in education. Given the particular concern for the best interests of the child together with the current serious societal and ecological

challenges, Värri (2011, p. 48) notes that tensions between the good of (global) society and the good of the individual are central aspects of contemporary discussions about the key question in Finnish education: creating conditions for the good life.

National curricula for Finnish music schools

Since the first Finnish national committee report on music school teaching was submitted in 1965,⁷⁵ six national curricula have regulated the aims and activities of music schools: 1978, 1988, 1992/1993, 1995, 2002 (extended syllabus) and 2005 (general syllabus). At the time of writing, new national curricula issued by the National Board of Education are in preparation and will take effect in 2018.

The national curricula for Finnish music schools are normative documents, reflecting general discussion and prevailing thought about state cultural policy. According to Broman-Kananen (2005), there was a main shift in discourse in the 1970s from 'art' as an autonomous concept and a professional activity towards 'culture' as an activity and a form of service that should be available for all citizens. Still, policies also reflected a firm conviction that Western art music constituted an important part of the *Bildung* of the nation. The principle of regional equality became important, but the cornerstone and main objective for music school education remained training for future professionals within the Western art music tradition; this aim also warranted state funding. A second turn occurred from the end of the 1980s, when the music school system was firmly established since two decades, had produced a satisfying number of musicians and music teachers, and was mature for new questions about its societal responsibilities. The first two curricula focused entirely on the content and organisational framework of the studies. From the beginning of the 1990s, the national curriculum also reflected constructivist ideas, distinguishable in the curricular text through an added focus on individual processes of knowledge construction and self-expression. (Broman-Kananen, 2005, pp. 47–54).

The current national core curricula for music schools were issued in 2002 (extended syllabus) and 2005 (general syllabus). They were elaborated after a major reform involving a new law (Act on Basic Education in the Arts 633/1998) which replaced earlier legislation pertaining only to music schools and included them within a general national system for optional arts education. In the two new curricula, studies in music schools are separated such that a distinction is made between strongly music-focused, long-term studies which prepare students for higher education, and more integrative arts education where music may dominate, but students can also choose to pursue other arts.

Finnish music school teachers are seen as autonomous agents who have the right and obligation to express their own interpretations of the curricular text in their teaching practices. In music schools, three levels of interpretation are assumed:

⁷⁵ Report of the music school committee (*Musiikkioppilaitostoimikunnan mietintö 1965: B 87*). See Broman-Kananen (2005), pp. 44–45.

the national core curriculum is interpreted by local authorities who are usually co-funding the music school; each music school is expected to elaborate its own curriculum, based on the national and local framework; and each teacher will interpret both national and local curricula in her or his own practice. This chain of interpretation is of particular interest when notions of value are involved.⁷⁶

As mentioned above, the ideal of a good relationship to music was included in the national core curriculum for the first time in 2002. Not only is it mentioned; it is the very first aim which is formulated in the introductory chapter in which “task, values, and general aims” of the extended syllabus are defined. The second aim that is articulated is “lifelong musical activity”. These two aims are included in the texts for both the extended and the general syllabus, whereas the extended syllabus also contains the aim of preparing students for higher music education. A version of the same objectives, “to create conditions for a lifelong interest”, applies to all the art forms included in the system of basic education in the arts. The aims of “joy in music-making” and “freedom of self-realisation” are present in the introductory texts for the general syllabus, and absent in the extended syllabus, although “musical self-expressivity” and “independent thinking” are included, and playing together with others is considered an important “factor” in creating and strengthening “musical joy” (mentioned, however, only in an attachment on how to organise teaching and learning).

The curriculum from 2002 has widely been thought to represent a more individualist and student-centred approach than previously (Pohjannoro, 2010, p. 4). Accordingly, the text states that the student’s personal development should be supported. In Finnish, the term used is *henkinen kasvu*. The word *kasvu* corresponds straightforwardly to ‘growth’, whereas the translation for *henkinen* is less obvious. *Henkinen* is an adjective derived from the noun *henki* which has several meanings, the most important being ‘spirit’, ‘mind’, ‘life’, and ‘breath’. The official Swedish translation of this term in the curricular text (*andlig*) means ‘spiritual’ and *henkinen kasvu* may certainly refer to spiritual or religious matters, but it can also refer to intellectual, mental, and psychological processes; the growth of the mind and the development of the person’s inner life. In this context, it makes sense to assume that the curriculum potentially covers all or several of these meanings. Further, music studies should contribute to the “consolidation of the personality” and to the development of creative and social skills. The desired working habits to be encouraged are concentration, goal-orientedness, and long-term perseverance, as well as “constructive activity” both as an individual and as a member of a group. A good learning environment, it is noted, takes different students and their ways of learning into account.

The conceptions of learning as articulated in the curriculum are influenced by social constructivist thought, emphasising that musical learning is “interactive

⁷⁶ An important limitation lies in a striving for reasonable uniformity which allows students to continue their studies in another school if they need to do so, for example in the case of relocation.

and contextual” as well as “essentially related” to the social and cultural situations in which it takes place. Learning environments need to have an open, encouraging and positive atmosphere; assessment should support the development of “good self-esteem”, and students should learn to identify their own strengths and weaknesses.

Aims for teaching and learning not directly related to the individual include interaction with other institutions which provide education in music and the arts, preserving and developing national music culture, and promotion of international collaboration. Specific musical skills that music school education should aim for are specifically listed and include, for instance, the ability to sing and notate melodies in major and minor keys, being able to recognise different types of cadenzas, and being familiar with the central musical styles related to studied genres. However, there is no doubt that in the national core curriculum from 2002, music education is presented as having instrumental aims and benefits, and that teachers are encouraged to work toward these various aims.

Connecting now the curricular values from 2002 with certain of the general ideas about values and goods presented in 2.3, it becomes possible to construct a profile of the ‘ideal’ Finnish music school graduate. In good agreement with Aristotle (as interpreted by MacIntyre), it is thought that students should have acquired dispositions and skills associated with the social orders and practices of music. Excellence is here translated partly as specific musical skills, partly as habits of the mind such as strong focus and perseverance. The enduring values in Finnish education, as crystallised in the analysis by Launonen (2000; see above, pp. 52–53), are all present in some form: *honesty*, translated as objective, adequate musical qualifications, as well as realistic self-knowledge; *hard work* and *self-discipline*; and *fairness* and *courtesy*, articulated as respect for students’ differences and the ability to work constructively in a group. The *Bildung* tradition can be seen as present in aims such as *henkinen kasvu* (‘spiritual/intellectual/psychological growth’) and *independent thinking*. *Creativity* is also emphasised, although perhaps challenging to discern. In music education, Muhonen (2010) has argued, the term is potentially a “slippery slogan” which can be used with reference to many different cultural and societal contexts and for different purposes (p. 86). For example, creativity may be seen as part of the objectives of *Bildung*, as relating to humanistic psychology, or as a commission from a society in pressing need of visionary individuals who may be able to provide solutions for financial, social, and ecological problems. Similarly, the term *group work skills* can point to necessary prerequisites for certain musical practices, or to characteristics that are appreciated for employability but not necessarily related directly to music.

With reference to the heuristic map of the varieties of goodness that music has been thought to promote in a young person’s life, the music school core curriculum seems less explicitly comprehensive. There is a strong emphasis on access to musical experience, expression, appreciation, and active participation.

Personal happiness seems to be either seen as tacitly implied, included in the concept of a good relationship to music, or considered secondary. Benefits for individual development and interrelationships with peers and community are articulated to some extent; family ties are not mentioned. Finally, among central/existential issues, the need to belong to a group can be seen as emphasised, whereas deeper questions of meaning and quality of life are not addressed directly.

In sum, ideal music school graduates, as they emerge through the curricular text, have the necessary musical knowledge and skill to go on to vocational and higher education in music. They are confident, self-disciplined, independent and self-directed; well-developed spiritually, intellectually, and psychologically; creative and social; respectful of national traditions and interested in international contacts; encouraging towards others and sufficiently self-critical towards themselves; able to work well both on their own and together with others. They plan to keep making music for the rest of their lives and the motivating force behind this intention is a strong interest in music and a ‘good relationship’ with it. It is to this last ideal that I will turn in the following section.

2.5 ‘A good relationship to music’

Since the mid-1990s, the aims of Finnish music school education have been associated with the concept ‘a good relationship to music’.⁷⁷ As the overviews in 2.2 and 2.3 make clear, there is a remarkable variety of ideas about how music can contribute to goodness in the life of children and young people. In this and the following section of the chapter, 2.5 and 2.6, I will analyse the idea of a ‘good relationship’ as one way of articulating what is good in and about music education, discuss implications, and review how it has been thought that this good might be achieved.

The thought that there is a special ‘relationship’ between human beings and music has been discussed by numerous music education scholars. In a study on music in the lives of Swedish and English 15-year-olds, Stålhammar (2004) noted that young people had “an important prior relation” with their “own” music (p. 14) and seemed to reject value judgments suggested by their school or the adult world. Correspondingly, Green (2008) raised the issue that “pupils

⁷⁷ In Finnish: *hyvä musiikkisuhde*. Translating the expression into English presents some challenges. Different choices could be made depending on the analogy suggested and perhaps the level of intensity and reciprocity imagined (cf. a good relation to music; a good relation with music; a good relationship with music). I have chosen ‘relationship’ on the basis of the analogy that Kurkela (1993) makes with human relationships, and also because of the similarity between the Finnish words *musiikkisuhde* and *ihmissuhde*, the latter referring to a (close) relationship between two human beings. A relationship is more than, for example, an ‘attitude’. However, choosing ‘to’ over ‘with’ underlines the symbolic character of the relationship; one does not expect music to possess agency or experience feelings, although music may be experienced as having these and other human characteristics.

often don't seem to relate to music in the curriculum" (p. 90). Investigating the process of "decolonizing" music education philosophy, Bradley (2012) stressed that students should be supported in freely discovering their "own unique relationship with music" (p. 414). For Swanwick (2012), the highest development that can be hoped for in music education involves a personal, conscious awareness of what music means to one's life, and the ability to "relate to music with sustained, original and involved independence" (pp. 69–72). In a detailed longitudinal study about the processes of children's musical learning, McPherson, Davidson and Faulkner (2012) searched their data for references to "intrapersonal relationships with the music itself"; "investment and commitment"; "real personal attachment to the music itself"; and "personal transaction with [music]" (pp. 219–220). The same study concluded that

a developmental study of music must look at what music *does* in people's lives, the relationship they have with it, rather than *what* music is in people's lives by virtue of the technical skills they may have acquired for it. (McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012, p. 221).

The concept of a 'good relationship to music' entered the national curriculum of music school teaching and learning in Finland in 2002, after having already been written into local curricula in many music schools. Adopting this aim as an official policy and legally binding educational principle represented a significant event in the history of Finnish music schools (Tuovila, 2003, p. 18; Heimonen, 2005, p. 119). The hope that students would have positive feelings about music as a result of their studies was not new; after all, one would think that most music teachers share this aspiration. Previously, the national curriculum for Finnish music kindergartens (many of which shared teachers and administrations with music schools) had included as primary aim "to awaken love for music" (Finnish National Board of General Education, 1978). However, as I will attempt to clarify, a good relationship to music as understood here cannot be stereotypically defined as love, motivation, or a positive attitude, but represents more specific and elaborate ideas which developed in a particular historical and scholarly context. The following section provides an orientation to the arguments that led to the change in the national curriculum.

Background

The expression 'a good relationship to music' crystallised from existing ideas among Finnish music school teachers, from scholarly discussion in Finnish music education, and from dialogue between teachers, researchers and policy-makers during the 1990s.⁷⁸ In particular, arguments for using the concept as an educational aim were elaborated during the 1990s in a series of publications by Kari Kurkela, a professor at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Kurkela's dual

⁷⁸ According to Kurkela, a major research project on music schools which the Sibelius Academy hosted and for which he was responsible (the MOP project, initiated in the mid-1990s) provided a space for reflection on the concept (personal communication, November 14, 2012).

backgrounds in music and psychoanalysis were woven together in his book *Landscapes of the mind and music: On musical performance and the psychodynamics of a creative position* (Kurkela, 1993).⁷⁹ In several later texts (Kurkela, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2006; Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999), thoughts from the book were developed as contributions to discussions about results, aims, and evaluation of teaching and learning in music schools. To date, these texts are available only in Finnish. In what follows, I will explicate the line of thought and examine its continuing wider relevance for music education.⁸⁰

The central argument in *Landscapes of the mind and music* is that music can be understood through the same “psychodynamic principles” as any other human activity. Key among these principles are strivings for pleasure and for security. Both are necessary in order to maintain a “creative position” from which personally meaningful ideas and ways of being can emerge without generating overwhelming anxiety. Since music has an extraordinarily flexible nature, Kurkela argues, it offers many possibilities as a source of strength, mastery, joy, comfort, and hope. Many complex and perhaps difficult emotions, fantasies, and experiences from nonmusical reality can be lived through symbolically in musical form. Music can be an arena in which it is possible to strive for excellence, but also a manifestation of fruitful rebellion through which new life experiences are made available (Kurkela, 1993, pp. 464–466).

The aim of music education, Kurkela believes, should be to support and guide students in their quest for deeply felt meaningfulness and satisfaction in musical experiences. This kind of relation to music is unlikely to develop in an atmosphere of coercion, fear, blaming and humiliation. It is crucial, he argues, that teaching and learning in music schools do not lead students to believe that the essence of music is constituted by external aims such as exams or the glory of performance. Passing exams is something students will tend to do ‘by the way’ as a secondary consequence of studying music for the sake of music (Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999, p. 146). It is highly questionable to recruit and instrumentalise music school students to serve secondary or “third-part” interests, such as the music school’s concern for its reputation, statistics, and funding; ambitious teachers’ need for self-promotion through showcase students; or parental ambitions which do not coincide with what the child is interested in. According to Kurkela (1993, p. 387), all of these interests are likely to disturb and corrupt the student’s authentic self-expression and desire for music. A frightened, anxious and stressed student may need to resort to various defense strategies, such as developing a compliant ‘false self’ (Winnicott, 1965) in order to live up to expectations which ultimately do not feel like his or her own (Kurkela, 1993, p. 353).

⁷⁹ In Finnish: *Mielen maisemat ja musiikki. Musiikin esittäminen ja luovan asenteen psykodynaamikka.*

⁸⁰ All translations from Kurkela’s texts are my own.

It is important, Kurkela (1993) argues, that music schools and music school teachers have sufficient trust in the results of a flexible attitude. Exerting intense pressure by taking advantage of the student's need for security and dignity and his or her emotional dependency on teachers and parents can produce measurable 'excellent results' such as successful exams and competition triumphs for a limited period of time. But high-stakes coercion strategies may cause tension, anxiety, envy and compulsive perfectionism, and prove devastating for later development (pp. 335–336). On the contrary, supporting the possibility for students to experience music as personally meaningful may not yield immediate and visible results, but as a strategy it is more sustainable and eventually more likely to be productive than manipulative overexploitation. In the more flexible scenario, teaching and learning become "a natural striving for the good" (p. 388).

After *Landscapes of the mind and music*, the concept of 'a good relationship to music' was developed in four consecutive texts: on the issue of results in music schools (Kurkela, 1995a); on the issue of what is essential in art (Kurkela, 1995b), on grounds for evaluating progress in music education (Kurkela, 1997) and on grounds for evaluating teaching in music schools (Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999). Throughout these texts, the question of what might be considered a valuable result is discussed with support from another question, namely what should be considered essential in and about music. What is it about music that makes it worthwhile? What is it that music needs to retain if it is not to lose what is most important? For Kurkela (1997), what is most essential about music is its intrinsic, noninstrumental, "metaphysical" value for a person's life: the kind of value that needs no justification other than the fact that to the person, music matters deeply, "representing the relative freedom in the possibilities of life" (p. 286). The intrinsic values of art, Kurkela (1995b) believes, can remind human beings of what is central, constitutive, and worthwhile in life: "some faith, hope, or love" (p. 40) which prevents inner desperation and gives strength to live.⁸¹

Kurkela's suggestion for a definition of 'progress' in music education is therefore articulated as follows:

Musical progress has occurred when a meaningful relationship to music has deepened, become more worthwhile and better at supporting the good life. (Kurkela, 1997, p. 286).

It is immediately clear that this definition is open to many interpretations and that it contains several terms which are themselves open, contingent, and can be subject to discussion. What, for example, gives content to 'meaningful', 'worthwhile', and 'the good life'? Kurkela replies that he has left both the definition of musical progress and the other concepts in the sentence as open as possible. It is obvious, he argues, that all of these concepts require analysis; it is

⁸¹ Kurkela refers here to Frankl (1963) on human beings' search for meaning.

equally clear that the content of a good relationship to music can be different for different persons and may change over time. Therefore, one of the basic professional skills of a music educator should be “the ability to understand the student’s musical needs and the aims that are valuable to [this student] specifically” (p. 286). When confronted with direct questions about what a good relationship to music means, Kurkela has deliberately refused to explicate the concept further:

See, because that is precisely the whole point of this thing, that you can’t spell it out just like that. That, you see, it always has to be determined separately for each person. Finding out is part of the teacher’s professional skill. How to realise it in the extant circumstances and conditions. Moreover, it can change along the way (personal communication, November 14, 2012).

The personal nature of meaningfulness is one of the reasons Kurkela (1997) cites for his very sceptical attitude to the idea of operationalising the concept of a good relationship to music for administrative purposes; for example, using it as a tool for assessment (p. 290). In fact, delineating the concept would even represent a contradiction in terms: according to Kurkela, the more one attempts to define ‘progress’ in explicit, timeless and final ways, the less likely it is that students will enjoy the freedom of creating ways of relating to music that will matter to them personally. In particular, quantitative assessment of a good relationship is not likely to be possible, much in the same way as love cannot be measured (p. 282). However, this should not stop teachers from hoping that their student’s love for music will deepen over time.

In his work, Kurkela makes a number of references to psychoanalytical sources, especially object relations theory as represented by Winnicott, Klein, and Bion, and self psychology as developed by Kohut. According to Kurkela, the links between psychoanalytic theories and the concept of a good relation to music are more a matter of oblique influence than correspondence in the sense that one might “read [Melanie] Klein and then see that this follows from that” (personal communication, November 14, 2012). As I understand his central arguments, they rest on the assertion that a variety of deep and sometimes difficult emotional and existential experiences are involved in music education, and on the conviction that teachers are well-advised to acknowledge this reality and engage in continual critical reflection on what should be considered a worthwhile ‘result’ of music education. These key points can be understood on their own and I will not proceed here to a thorough background presentation of object relations theory or self psychology, but I will mention a few points that are relevant for the present study.

Object relations theory describes human beings as existing within the contexts of relationships, both external (with other people) and internal (between different aspects of a personality), such that both relational worlds affect each other (Gomez, 1997). From the thought of Winnicott, Kurkela highlights the concept of transitional objects: items that form a connection between child and caregiver when the caregiver is not available, such as a teddy bear or a piece of clothing.

As something which exists partly in reality and partly in the child's imagination, the transitional object provides a sense of security, comfort, and emotional support which is later integrated as part of the child's psyche. Sounds and music can represent transitional experiences, Kurkela (1993) points out; for example, children can sometimes hum songs that the parent has sung to them in order to create an illusion of presence and security (pp. 459–460). Winnicott (1971) believed that artistic activity in adult life flows from the human ability to create transitional objects and experiences which can serve not only to soothe but also to give free play to self-expression and imagination.

Kohut's "selfobject" may be seen as including transitional objects but the concept is wider, covering a great variety of external objects which are in some sense experienced as integral parts of the self. The role of well-functioning selfobjects is to support and encourage the person and contribute to the vitality and harmony of the self. The child's first selfobjects are therefore its caregivers, but throughout a person's life, different kinds of selfobjects remain relevant; they are not limited to human beings and material items but can include habits, education, work, tastes, culture, artistic activity, admired figures, political affiliations, and national identity (see e.g. Kohut, 1984).

For Kurkela, music is very well suited as a selfobject because of its flexible nature and its ability to reflect a multitude of meanings.

[Music] is a "better" self-object than another person in the sense that it won't change its mind or get disappointed or hurt, become tired or feel exploited. It can stand many different interpretations and adapt to them without getting anxious or feel that its identity is threatened. It can be rejected and then dug up again when needed. (Kurkela, 1993, p. 466).

This quote provides some clues to the idea of music as something to which it is possible to have a relationship. Music can be experienced symbolically as a living being which has human characteristics and is able to do things that living beings do: encourage, push, energise, care for, hold, rock, and comfort. Music's expressive capacity allows it to 'tell' what it is like to feel lonely, full of longing, afraid, restless, empty, or tired. In this function, music can provide a sense of companionship, understanding and security. To use more everyday terms, music can be experienced as a friend. (Kurkela, 1993, pp. 460–461, 466).⁸²

In sum, although we have seen that the concept of a good relationship to music needs to stay open to interpretation in order to retain its intended function, there

⁸² A classical example of a person addressing music as if addressing another human being is Franz Schubert's lied *An die Musik* (1817) to poetry by Franz von Schober. The "I" of the poem thanks music for "carrying me away" from dreariness and "life's mad whirl" towards "warm love" and "a better world". A large-scale study on strong experiences with music shows that it is fairly common for people (about 20% of the participants) to have the sense that music addresses them directly. The same study reported that music could inspire feelings of consolation, hope, courage, liberation, relief, and confidence (Gabrielsson, 2011; Gabrielsson & Juslin, 2003).

are recurring descriptives in Kurkela's texts. A 'good' relationship is uncoerced and free, based on inner motivation, personally meaningful, rich, living, ever deepening, evolving, and open to creative imagination and adaptation. There is a sense that the relationship to music supports and encourages the person and contributes to a good life, both present and long-term. There is also a focus on the intrinsic value of music. For Kurkela, this value can take on a "metaphysical" character, i.e. become of constitutive importance for how a person experiences his or her life, and at the same time help point to other constitutive aspects of life. In this way, music matters to the person beyond explanations or justifications and is experienced as a particular kind of reality, even a way of life. A deep connection to music is often referred to in terms that highlight the embodied nature of the experience: for example, the person feels "moved" and "touched" (Kurkela, 1993, p. 415). The point, Kurkela emphasises, is that a good relationship to music can have many forms, "and the more it is defined through the person, what music means to him or her or what music is, the more likely it is that the relationship will be good" (K. Kurkela, personal communication, November 14, 2012).

Other Finnish scholars who were active in a large research project about music schools hosted by the Sibelius Academy in the early 2000s elaborated on the notion in various ways. Broman-Kananen (2005) understood the concept as a "dialectic third alternative" to the polarised dichotomy between studies that prepare for "serious" professionalism and studies that aim for "joyful" amateuring (p. 26) and also referred to teachers who said that their focus was on "music as a life-giving force" (p. 89). Heimonen (2002) argued that flexible aims in music education could be seen as linked to the legal principle of "the best interests of the child", which takes precedence in all conflict situations where children are involved (p. 6). She highlighted the purpose of creating "a good rapport between the pupil and the world of music" (p. 180). Later, the managing director of the Association of Finnish Music Schools stated that "only profound commitment and the experience of music as a meaningful part of life can sustain the pupil's interest in later years", and therefore, "establishing a good relationship with music [has] become the basis of the new teaching methods" (Klemettinen, 2006). Judging from the concept's place in national and local curricula, the aim of a good relationship to music has become an integral part of Finnish music school culture. Kurkela lectured widely throughout Finland during the 1990s, which may have added to the long-term impact of the idea even though he has not published on the subject since then. He admits to being surprised by how well the idea was received, but observes that it seems indeed "to have been taken on by individual music schools as well as by the music school system" (K. Kurkela, personal communication, November 14, 2012).

Above all, the concept seems to have articulated what many music school teachers and directors already thought, working like a magnet for similar ideas (T. Klemettinen, personal communication, October 24, 2013). When the concept entered the national curriculum, Kurkela did not participate in the writing

process (personal communication, November 14, 2012); by that time, there seems to have been at least some consensus that the idea was important. Objections had centred around a worry that teaching and learning would lose discipline and ambition. Kurkela (1997) replied that the approach did not imply renouncing goal-oriented studies, exams or competitions; only that music school employees needed to think carefully about, for example, how the meanings and atmosphere surrounding exams would influence the student's relationship to music (p. 292).

It may even be seen as rather remarkable that National Board of Education as well as the Association of Finnish Music Schools accepted an open, dialogue-dependent, nonquantifiable concept as the very basis for teaching, learning and evaluation in music schools. "Although a good and meaningful relationship to music is easy to observe if you have an eye for it", Kurkela (1997) wrote, "it is much more difficult to document as a result than single memorable triumphs" (p. 287). What the idea demands of the teacher is the ability and willingness to relate to children in a caring way, make efforts to imagine what might be or become musically meaningful for them, and discuss pedagogical decisions with colleagues. Background knowledge of the psychoanalytical theory which has influenced Kurkela's own thinking is not necessary, he argues, "any more than it is for being a mother's or a father . . . relating in a naturally constructive way to children" (K. Kurkela, personal communication, November 14, 2012). "Talking things over" and "thinking together" is central and adds an interpretive dimension to the process: "That's another reason not to spell out [what a good relationship to music is] as bullet points, it's better that people think it over . . . together, because then there's a better chance that your own view might be enriched". Using a metaphor close to hermeneutics, Kurkela argues that "if you talk to many different persons, your horizon of understanding becomes wider" (personal communication, November 14, 2012).

In Finnish music school policy, then, the concept of a good relationship to music has a particular history and has been presented here in its particular theoretical context. It is linked to the principle of the best interests of the child and also to psychoanalytical thought where individual freedom is central; however, in Kurkela's writings, there is abundant discussion of teacher-student-parent dialogue and the complex relation between creative subjectivity and tradition (e.g. Kurkela, 2006). In its implications, the concept puts a great deal of trust in individual teachers and their "natural" tendency to show parent-like care and understanding for their young students. As such, the idea emerged in part as a countersuggestion to the idea of basing the funding of music schools on the number of exams passed by children; a position similar to MacIntyre's insistence on a distinction between internal and external goods of practices. The concept designates a desired result of teaching and learning which is seen as essential, but neither immediately quantifiable nor definable in a singular way.

Discussion

In conclusion to this section, I will examine and critically discuss the idea of ‘a good relationship to music’ through its use as a metaphor or analogy, its connections to what is valued in life more generally, the embeddedness of ‘goodness’, and the sociocultural dimensions of ‘relating to music’.

In the wording of the Finnish curriculum as well as in the wordings by other scholars cited above, it is not immediately clear what is meant either by music or by a relationship. For example, we may talk about ‘relating’ to a particular musical work in a desirable way, perhaps with admiration and appreciation. But this is different from experiencing music as having such an important role in one’s life that it is natural to talk about a relationship similar to the relationship one might have with another human being. To stretch the analogy somewhat, a good relationship might mean love, friendship, respect, a favourable attitude, reasonable diplomatic relations, or simply that one does not have anything in particular against such and such. This study proceeds on the premise that the term ‘music’ does not have a single, transparent definition, and that the meanings of various works and kinds of music are not given once and for all or for any human being in any culture at any time. If we accept this open view, there is indeed additional reason to believe that there are many versions of good relationships to music. Too narrow thinking about the concept may also fail to account for various aspects surrounding music-making which are sometimes discarded as ‘instrumental’, ‘secondary’, or ‘extrinsic’, but make very much sense to the person involved; for example, attachment to important others with whom particular music is shared.

One of the consequences of referring to relationships to music in similar terms as relationships between human beings is that prevailing societal beliefs about human relationships may influence conceptions of what is good and desirable; for example, long-term commitment. In effect, immediately after the aim of creating conditions for a good relationship to music, the Finnish national curriculum for music schools includes the instruction that teaching and learning should promote lifelong music-making. But ‘more’ does not necessarily mean ‘better’ in this context, and whether ‘lifelong’ is ‘good’ or not is contingent on the nature and quality of the relationship itself.

Referring to ‘a good relationship to music’ inevitably involves expressing something about what one values in life more generally. Understood with support from the heuristic map presented in 2.3, Kurkela’s thought seems to have its closest affinities with the ideal of human flourishing, and with the observation that music can have ‘metaphysical’ dimensions through which life can be experienced as deeply meaningful. Understood in this way, his work contributes to both psychological and ethical theorisation about music school education. Kurkela argues that students should be supported in conceiving of music as an emotional and creative free zone, and that third-part interests tend to corrupt the personal, unique relationship to music. This line of thinking is

resemblant of Rousseau's belief that children develop best when unhampered by pressures from society (see Varkøy, 2007), or Freud's (1930/1989) conviction that civilisation and personal discontent are inevitably linked. Distrust towards any ideas that are not immediately experienced as the student's own is perhaps unnecessarily polarising. Students' personal preferences may or may not overlap with values which are relevant to musical traditions. The traditions of (musical) communities, in turn, may or may not overlap with values defended by other actors in society. However, this does not yet or in itself say anything substantial about the goodness of the espoused values, which may themselves be subjected to discussion.

Even when individual choice is defended, entire self-sufficiency does not seem possible in music. One reason is that some of the goods that are embedded in musical practices cannot always be chosen or unchosen at will. In other words, while it is possible to decide to commit to one specialised genre/subgenre or another, it is often not possible to ignore subsequent, ensuing commitments. For example, deciding to learn clarinet-playing (even through its most innovative, hybrid contemporary practices) involves learning about quality reeds and breathing that produces good airflow, as well as becoming acquainted with at least some of the repertoire that clarinet players have been particularly interested in throughout the centuries, and the reasons for their interest. In addition, commitment to a certain kind of music may take the expression of commitment to a tradition where past and present practitioners are experienced as colleagues, friends and companions.⁸³ It does not necessarily follow that traditions and practices are approached only with uncritical reverence. One prerequisite for goodness in musical practices may in fact be the open possibility for discussion, criticism and innovation, as expressed in the definition of a practice by MacIntyre (1981/2007): "human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended" (see above, p. 6). In the context of increasing diversity in music schools, Kurkela's (1997) discussion of what is most essential about music may not be precise enough. Instead, one might, in each specific case, reformulate the question as: What is it that *this* music needs to retain if it is not to lose what is most important?

A further dimension of the idea of a 'relationship' term is the sense of mutuality. In principle, we do not think of music as a sentient being with agency. Still, it is striking that people often report that they have the impression that music or musicians speak directly to them, care about their concerns and understand how they feel (see e.g. Gabriellson, 2011, pp. 564–565; cf. also McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012, p. 221, on "what music *does* in people's lives"). The sense of reciprocity and mutuality is reinforced for instance when people express care and concern for 'fragile' musical traditions and state their wish to

⁸³ Hence, for example, the tradition among jazz musicians to refer affectionately to legends of the genre by their first name: Duke, Ella, Miles.

‘keep the music alive’. From this point of view, a good relationship to music does not only consist in ‘serving the art’ or being socialised into behaving politely towards it. For example, a music student might be moved to take a caring attitude, and also be justified in expecting to ‘get something in return’ for engaging in a relationship with music.

The way in which students experience the world of music is likely to depend at least in part on how they are treated in it and how human relationships within it are experienced (see 2.6). Referring, as Heimonen (2002) does, to “a good rapport between the student and *the world of music*” (p. 180, my emphasis) places responsibility on the music world’s representatives, such as music teachers and practitioners. As argued not just in object relations theory but also by social constructivists and social constructionists from Vygotsky and Mead to Wertsch and Valsiner (see e.g. Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000, *The social mind*), the developing mind becomes ‘peopled’ by voices and traces of dialogues from growing experience. Understood in this way, the relationship to music can be said to exist both in the outside world and within the student. Interaction between persons as well as between persons and context is as central to understandings of music as a phenomenon as it is to education in general. In the next section, I will discuss contextual aspects of music from the point of view of music education; namely, in terms of the conditions for teaching and learning.

2.6 ‘Creating the conditions’

As discussed in the previous sections, the meanings of music and the ways in which music matters to different persons seem to be diverse, varied, and even individual. Some values and meanings are inherited as a part of historical music practices; some emerge through contemporary practices and personal experience. In all of these cases, long-standing and new values in societies and communities tend to intersect and influence musical development.

But how can music school teachers, who do not know in advance what meanings will emerge for each student, adopt a ‘teleological’ position with respect to their work? How can they promote optimal development when it is still uncertain, for example, what musical genre(s) their students will be most interested in? These questions take on a temporal dimension given that relationships to music and the dimensions of music that are experienced as meaningful often change and evolve over the years, particularly in the lives of young persons.

Unless music school teachers make the decision to pave out a specialised road for their students beforehand without allowing room for questioning or meandering, they will have to rely on what Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky (1982) have called “judgment under uncertainty”. For Shulman (1998), this type of judgment is not only unavoidable, but a necessary prerequisite for professional teacher action (p. 9). To an extent, parents share the same predicament: they need to get to know their children, offering support and guidance to the best of their knowledge and ability, but also allow sufficient

freedom, hoping that the children in the course of their development will find things to do and to care about which give their lives a sense of richness and meaning. What the Finnish music school curriculum asks of teachers is not to create good relationships to music, but to create conditions in which such relationships can be born.

What, then, are ‘conditions’? Hanken and Johansen (2013) use the concept ‘frame factors’ (in Norwegian: *rammefaktorer*) to designate conditions that can influence music pedagogy in both positive and negative ways, depending on how well-functioning they are. Formal frames include (1) the physical frames for teaching and learning: classroom size, acoustics, and the like, (2) time frames for lessons and practising, (3) access to learning materials, instruments and other equipment, (4) financial frames, (5) frames for purposes, contents and evaluation such as those included in national and local curricula or materials used, (6) organisatory frames such as legal regulation, class size, working hours, or the degree of discretionary power teachers have. Informal frames include expectations, routines, and traditions (pp. 40–41). Kurkela (1993) describes the organisational structures of music schools in a model not unlike an ecosystem where several levels of interaction between involved agents are taken into account. The structures include students, teachers, the school itself, the system to which the schools belong (for instance, the official authorities which regulate activities and the national association of music schools) and the society in which the system operates. In Kurkela’s view, interests should primarily be served in the order just mentioned. Hence, music schools should support teachers and teachers should support students, not the other way around. Serving interests in reverse order, for example by attempting to produce competitive students in order to secure funding for the school, entails the risk of prioritising aims related neither to children nor to music (pp. 375–379).⁸⁴

The closest and most obvious ‘conditions’ and ‘learning environments’ are constituted by the persons who are involved in the student’s learning. Moore, Burland and Davidson (2003) found that the most important influences on motivation and commitment to musical practice during childhood were parental support, the teacher’s personality (neither “too relaxed” nor “too pushy”, p. 529), and noncompetitive, collaborative peer interactions where more advanced students become positive role models. The importance of attending to the quality of both parental support and the dialogue between teachers and parents has been confirmed in several other studies on instrumental teaching (e.g. Burland & Davidson, 2004; Creech, 2010; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Haddon, 2009; McPherson, 2009). The significance of a trusting and well-functioning relationship between student and teacher is well-established in literature on

⁸⁴ Similarly, MacIntyre (1981/2007) has pointed out that institutions are characteristically occupied with ‘external goods’ such as money, power, and status. While shared practices inevitably require institutions to be able to function, institutional focus on external goods can also corrupt and potentially damage the internal goods of the practices.

instrumental teaching (see e.g. Creech & Hallam, 2003; Davidson, Howe & Sloboda, 1995/1996).

Among Finnish scholars, Heimonen (2002), Kurkela (1997) and Tuovila (2003) have argued that judgments about ‘good relationships to music’ as well as ‘the best interests of the child’ are best prepared in local dialogue. As a minimum, then, deliberations would involve the student, his or her parents or other caregivers, and the teacher. The purpose is to form an understanding about the relevant context and background for decisions about aims and lesson contents. In such dialogues, Kurkela (1997) believes, two forms of expertise combine: teachers’ experience, background knowledge about musical practices, and ability to determine what is realistic on the one hand; and students’ growing self-knowledge about what is meaningful for them on the other. Although ‘goodness’ is partly predetermined through ethical principles such as nonmaleficence, it also has an emergent quality.

Heimonen (2002, p. 98) notes that the principle of the best interests of the child is related to each child’s right to a certain degree of autonomy, i.e. to be heard in matters that concern him or her. Necessary restrictions, Heimonen (p. 179) writes, need to be determined by context. In her longitudinal study on children who studied at Finnish music schools, Tuovila (2003) found that all teacher actions which seemed to promote long-term interest in music were in some way linked to respect for the young student: showing appreciation for the repertoire that the child wished to engage with, being interested in the child’s life more generally, maintaining a good dialogue with the parents, and paying attention to the musical cultures within children’s own peer groups.

For Kurkela (1997), there are no ‘techniques’ for securing meaningful musical activity. The teacher’s task is to be the student’s ally: to provide patient support, “co-dreaming”, and encouragement, to represent optimism while being able to tolerate what is not yet ready, and also to help the student to delay gratification. Establishing a caring relationship built on trust between teacher and student is essential. In a musically rich, sufficiently free and psychologically safe environment, the student can make gradual, optimal progress, balancing between feeling secure and taking new risks (see also Kurkela, 2006). In his writings about this approach to music education, Kurkela cites several psychoanalytical sources: Winnicott (1965) on the encouraging, “facilitating” environment, where the parent shows an intuitive understanding for what the child needs; Kohut (1984) on “optimal frustration”; and Bion (1997) as well as Ogden (2005) on being able to dream “undreamt dreams”.

In the best of scenarios, according to Kurkela (1993), music education should respect children’s needs, interests, and freedom; diminish symptoms of anxiety, shame, and guilt; and help children to develop into the unique human beings they are. In psychoanalytical terms, ‘good’ music education supports the development of a wise and merciful superego and refrains from allying with an archaic, cruel, proud, rejecting superego. One of the advantages of music is that

it offers a realm where the realities of life can be experienced and expressed in a symbolic way, halfway between the real and the not-real, as in play. Therefore, Kurkela argues, music school teachers need to watch out for situations where students feel threatened ‘in real life’; for example, being afraid of losing parental love and approval if they fail (pp. 313–315). In cases where students experience strong external pressure to perform well, Kurkela believes, they can develop a sense of debt for the time and effort invested by teachers and parents. The student then functions under the unspoken and frightening obligation of having to pay a form of ransom for his or her own existence. If a student does not live up to his or her teacher’s needs for narcissistic gratification, the teacher needs sufficient self-knowledge in order to refrain from coercion, revengefulness, or adding pressure by establishing pecking-orders among students (p. 345).

Instrumentalised purposes for music education are also met with strong critique by Kurkela, who argues that such aims add to the risk of making music ‘too real’, thereby endangering not only the student’s sense of psychological security but also the dimension of playfulness and the intrinsic satisfaction which comes from making music (Kurkela, 1993, p. 346).⁸⁵ Freedom from coercion, Kurkela points out, should logically also be granted to music school teachers. Instead of being forced to conform to productivity measures such as number of exams, teachers should be trusted to use their own expertise and judgment in their work with students (pp. 370–372).

In international scholarship on teacher judgment in music education, one prominent discussion has centred on *phronesis*, the virtue which Aristotle associates with appropriate action in particular cases. *Phronesis* requires skills of practical reasoning which allow wise analysis of specific situations. Although exercising *phronesis* involves paying attention to rules of thumb, standards, procedures and traditions, a larger perspective on relevant circumstances is always necessary, especially with regard to the flourishing of the human beings concerned. Thus, Bowman states:

Deciding what courses of action are appropriate in the light of local circumstances, in light of present need and resources, and in light of the unpredictability of educational outcomes lies at the heart of what it means to be a professional music educator. (Bowman, 2005c, p. 125).

Protecting the best interests of the child is part of teachers’ ethical responsibility. In music education, Regelski has emphasised an ethics of care similar to the helping professions, where good practice involves applying professional knowledge in the service of the patient (or student), respecting the principle of

⁸⁵ In a particularly caustic metaphor, Kurkela has compared music competitions with product fairs: “The students become products which, like beer brands, are offered to various music education industrial fairs in the hope that they will win gold medals. Students are then expected to polish the image of their production unit.” (Kurkela, 1995a, p. 35).

nonmaleficence (doing no harm), and contributing to one's best ability to the good life of those who put themselves in one's trust (see e.g. Regelski, 2009, 2011a).⁸⁶ For Regelski as well as for D. J. Elliott and Silverman (2015), music should first and foremost be seen as activity that is accessible to all students, feels meaningful to them, and helps them to live well. Therefore, they argue, teachers need to adopt an open attitude, accepting that there are many musics and musical activities that can promote worthy aims.

Drawing on Dewey's writings on art as experience, Westerlund (2008) writes that it is important for music educators to ask under which conditions learners are "likely to experience a personal positive value of their music education" (p. 80). For Westerlund, the answer is that learning experiences need to contain personal desire and interest.

In principle, it may be possible that students, whose musical performances may be qualitatively good, during the process of learning do not create attitudes that are experienced as positive enough to support a life-long interest in music, or at least in music-making. For some, the costs of music studies can even become intolerable prohibiting the final enjoyment of what should be enjoyable by its very nature. (Westerlund, 2008, p. 85).

The question then follows: "what kinds of means (or teaching methods) are valuable in and for creating positive attitudes that may lead to a life-long interest?" (p. 88). Westerlund builds on studies by e.g. Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall and Tarrant (2003), Tuovila (2003) and Green (2001) to argue strongly for democratic learning environments where students can influence choice of repertoire and be active in directing their own learning. One consequence of taking what students themselves value into account is that hierarchical distinctions between musical and nonmusical aims become less relevant. A second consequence is related to time: ends that are too far away, no matter how worthy they are, need to be balanced with here-and-now value, including how approaches to teaching and learning are experienced by students. In this way, as already argued by Dewey (1939/1988), means and ends can be understood as a continuum (Westerlund, 2008, p. 90).

According to a study by Pohjannoro (2010), there have been conscious strivings in Finnish music schools towards flexibility "so that the children's own aims and sensitive periods are better taken into account" (p. 30). The study indicates that a tendency towards student-centredness is visible both in local curricula and in teacher practices. A statement from the managing director of the Association of Finnish Music Schools supports the impression of a gradual shift towards more freedom. While "tradition sits firmly in our collective values," he says,

one of the big questions in music education has been and will always be integrating the music made by the young on their own initiative with the goal-oriented music

⁸⁶ The Aristotelian connection between *praxis* and *phronesis* is emphasised throughout Regelski's work.

education provided at the music schools. The system must not be an end in itself, and nor must it smother individuality. Open, flexible teaching structures provide a framework for varied, pluralist music education. (Klemettinen, 2006, para. 12).

Among others, Froehlich (2007a) has argued that music teachers need a rich body of professional knowledge in order to engage in skilful “diagnostic acts” (p. 15) in their teaching. Froehlich is in doubt as to whether this body of knowledge currently exists; if music teachers and music teacher educators are aware of existing alternatives, and if they allow themselves to be openly uncertain, to reason critically and to deliberate. This worry is relevant to current discussion about music school teacher qualifications and lack of peer mentoring both in music schools (Tiainen et al, 2012) and in higher music education (Juntunen, 2014). In contrast to for instance the medical professions, there are at the time of this study no legal obligations for Finnish music school teachers to engage in continuing professional development. In a statement reminiscent of arguments for phronesis in music education, Froehlich cites Shulman:

Only an informed and mindful choice of what best fits a particular musical or behavioral circumstance in a given moment—that is, *knowingly* and *purposefully* choosing one response from among multiple options—is a truly professional act. This is what I understand Lee S. Shulman [1998] to be saying when he describes professional action as making decisions “under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty”. (Froehlich, 2007a, pp. 12–13).

Froehlich’s argument sheds light on the similarities between Alperson’s ‘robust praxialism’ as a philosophy of music education, and Kurkela’s insistence on personal meaning and freedom in music school teaching and learning. For Alperson (2010b), music is best understood by attending to “the domains of musical meaning and value that music educators, music practitioners, and music lovers have thought worthy of focused attention” (p. 176). The ambition of robust praxialism is to “embrace the full measure of musical meaning and value” (p. 191). Kurkela (1993) describes the core of a good relationship to music as “all the positive ways in which music can exist and because of which it is worthwhile” (p. 318). Music school teachers, Kurkela (1997) has argued, need a deep and wide perspective and expertise on the variety of well-grounded purposes that music education can have; especially purposes that are different from their own. Similarly, Alperson (2010b) states that the very variety of musical experiences and practices is what makes music attractive to people in the first place.

The dimension of informed choice on which Froehlich insists reveals a weakness in the argument that musical and nonmusical aims can or should be seen as a continuum. It is possible to imagine situations where the ‘best musical interests’ of the child (understood, for example, as optimal musical development within a specialisation) may not be compatible with the best interests of the child with regard to his or her life as a whole. A wise music educator might in some cases encourage students to reach ever higher levels of mastery, while in other cases it might be appropriate to support a student’s expressed wish to discontinue

lessons and practising, temporarily or permanently. In both situations, the music teacher acts in order to protect the essential outcome of music education: that music contributes meaning and value to the student's life. For Kurkela, the goodness that music education should seek is largely a matter of freedom which allows the person to develop reliable and sustaining inner sources of musical motivation, strength, autonomy, creativity, satisfaction, security and comfort. Such meaning emerges in unique ways for each individual, since every person's life history is different (Kurkela, 1993, p. 46; 1997, p. 290).

There are no guarantees that choice of repertoire (whether suggested by teacher or student), specific methods or work in peer groups in and by themselves can produce good relationships to music. Still, as argued in the literature reviewed above, it seems important for teachers to make decisions in these areas carefully. In addition, superficial notions of 'student-centredness' can conceal the possibility that the music that matters to the teacher can take on a special meaning for the students – for the very reason that the music has been shared with a special person, or because the students have had convincing experiences during learning (see Burnard & Björk, 2010, p. 30).

In conclusion, it is neither entirely up to the student nor entirely up to the teacher to define what 'a good relationship to music' is and under what conditions it is most likely to emerge. Leaving the concept open has been a way of handling the paradox that teachers need to act although they do not know in advance exactly what the aim for each student will be, and although there are no guarantees that even the best frame factors will produce desired outcomes. Still, actions are not decided upon in the dark or at random. There are better and worse conditions for enabling good relationships to music, and teachers' choices do seem to matter. Seen in this way, the ability to understand what is wise to do in particular situations can be considered a new norm and part of new requirements for teacher competence within the traditions and practices of Finnish music school teaching and learning.

2.7 Summary and remarks

In this chapter, I have reviewed previous research on the aims and challenges of teaching and learning in music schools in Finland and the other Nordic countries. I have examined historical and contemporary ways in which it has been thought that music education can contribute to goodness in the life of children and young people. Given that there seems to be a number of contenders to the privilege of defining value in music school education, I have suggested a heuristic map with broad categories of goodness which, although not exhaustive, can provide support for the analysis of aspirations expressed in music school teacher practices. Finally, I have contextualised and presented a line of thought related to human flourishing which has been influential for Finnish music school policy since the mid-1990s, and reviewed discussions about the conditions for accomplishing this and similarly articulated aims.

The curriculum for Finnish music schools states as a main guideline that teaching and learning should “create conditions under which a good relationship to music can be born”. The meaning of this concept was deliberately left open from the beginning. As we have seen, goodness in relation to music can be interpreted in a variety of ways related to definitions of ‘musical value’, general educational aims, cultural and social practices, prevailing ideals in communities and societies, and national policies for music education. The Finnish music school system expressly puts considerable trust into the hands of teachers, viewing their dialogue with students and parents as the final and decisive link in the chain of interpretations of the national core curriculum. The interpretive process starts with reformulations by local authorities, continues with interpretive work within each music school as an institution, and ends in the dynamic process of everyday decision-making of each teacher, who is expected to elaborate an individual curriculum for each student.

I suggest that there is good reason to believe that music school teaching reflects values and aims from different traditions and times and that new approaches are being added to the old in a cumulative, multilayered way, as Muukkonen (2010) found in her study of Finnish school music teacher practices. Research that accepts and acknowledges considerable complexity and variety within the practices of music and music education, such as this study, finds natural affinity with Pinar’s (2012) notion that curriculum represents “a complicated, that is, multiply referenced conversation” (p. 43) between present, historical and future interlocutors who are relevant to the educational context. One obvious place to study this conversation is in discussions about practice development among music school teachers themselves. In the following chapter, I will set out the methodological consequences of holding these views.

3. Methodological discussion: Towards interpretive practice analysis

In this chapter, I will present the logic behind the choice of methodology and research methods which connect the theoretical points of departure with the purpose of this study. Starting with the question of how music school teachers' aspirations might be understood (3.1), I will then discuss the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of interpretive research (3.2), the possibility of generating meaning in conversation more generally and in music education research specifically (3.3), and the theoretical background for a collaborative approach to understanding and developing music school teacher practices (3.4).

3.1 Understanding teacher aspirations

As we have seen so far, performing the work of weighing and balancing of the different values and goods associated with music school education has become an important part of Finnish music school teachers' professional activity. With reference to the definition of a practice formulated by MacIntyre (1981/2007), music school teaching seems to be in the process of both questioning and extending the "conceptions of the ends and goods involved" (p. 187). Criteria for careful balancing can be based on a number of more or less compatible ideals and aims, including child-centredness, pluralism, democracy, excellence, or customer satisfaction. Special 'commissions' for value education can also emerge in society, as exemplified in a statement by the managing director of the Association of Finnish Music Schools:

Now that the professional music school objectives have been achieved, the focus in music education has shifted to developing the all-round personality of the child Whereas [student assessment] was formerly designed to check whether the students had reached the target level of knowledge and skills, its aim is now to encourage, to provide a basis for further study and to generate a healthy self-esteem. (Klemettinen, 2006).

The intention of this study is to gain a substantial understanding about what is significant to the teacher-participants by attending to their aspirations and commitments. In the context of music education, writing about the prerequisites for understanding musical practices, Alperson (1991) states that "the results of human action cannot be adequately understood apart from the motives, intentions, and productive considerations of the agents who bring them into being" (p. 236).

Starting from the often-cited first observation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1094a1–2) that "each expertise, each inquiry, each action and each decision seems to aim at *some* good" (quote, translation and emphasis, Vogt, 2010, p. 3), my assumption is that music school teachers have at least some varieties of goodness in mind as they work with their students, and that the goodness in

question is related to what the teachers for various reasons think might make positive contributions to the students' lives.⁸⁷ Further, I assume that as conditions for teaching and learning in music schools change and traditions continue to live on side by side, teachers will be confronted with puzzles and challenges with regard to the varieties of goodness that they wish to promote, and that they will also perhaps attempt to resolve these puzzles in some way.

It can be argued that this is a rosy preconception of teachers' aspirations. At certain points of their career or even time of the day, teachers are perhaps not first and foremost preoccupied with the good life of their students. They may be promoting their own careers, competing with colleagues, trying to earn a living while wishing they were full-time performers instead, or even satisfying personal needs of feeling admired and powerful. Although such aspects of music school teachers' lives may emerge in the course of this study, they will not constitute its focus. Keeping in mind MacIntyre's idea that goods internal to practices are realised during strivings to achieve the forms of excellence that are characteristic of those practices, and Kurkela's assertion that dialogue is necessary in order to promote good relationships to music, I will look for desired aims as described in conversations with and among music school teachers and expressed in their work, anticipating that such descriptions will be at least partly related to what the teachers themselves value and feel committed to. The intention is not to deny that some of their aspirations may be determined by institutional aims and/or questionable from some point of view. What is strived for is a trustworthy account of what the participants in this study emphasise as important in the light of their own practices.

Part of my intention is to study how music school teachers express the meaning of 'goodness' in the context of teaching and learning music. The project, then, is firmly anchored in an interpretive research tradition and it will rest on presuppositions underlying interpretive methodology. At the same time, interpretations are not generated *ex nihilo*. In 2.1, I have reviewed research on Nordic music school teaching from the perspective of the aims schools and policy makers have seen as worthwhile and valuable. In 2.2 and 2.3, I have taken a wide perspective on the varieties of goodness that music education has been thought to promote. In 2.5, I have analysed the genesis and significance of the concept 'a good relationship to music', and in 2.6, I have discussed how it has been thought that music teachers can create conditions that promote good relationships to music. At this point, my ambition is to juxtapose this first, more theoretical part of the thesis with exposure to the reflections and inquiries of a small group of Finnish music school teachers. Like Yanow (2014), I "need my theoretical and philosophical debates grounded in lived experience" (p. 5). And as suggested by Noaparast (2013), my strategy is to aim at a form of "moderate

⁸⁷ See e.g. Raz (2008), *On the guise of the good*, on attributing to agents the belief that their actions have some value-endowing property.

dualism” which acknowledges both second-order philosophical activity and the wisdom of the practical realm.⁸⁸

3.2 The presuppositions and logic of interpretive research

The ‘interpretive turn’ in the human sciences has its historical background in 19th and 20th century philosophical discussions about what is involved in creating knowledge about human experience and social life. Two influential schools of thought, phenomenology and hermeneutics, shared an emphasis on *meaning*; i.e. the intentions and sense-making associated with human action, language, institutions, rituals, and human artefacts such as texts, tools, symbols, and art.⁸⁹ From the beginning, the central concern for thinkers and researchers in these traditions has been that some of the ontological and epistemological presuppositions underpinning empirical study in the natural sciences do not always provide sufficient grounding for inquiry in the human sciences. Two serious objections have been raised against the positivist principle of accepting only the ‘observable’ and empirically ‘verifiable’ as ways to valid knowledge. First, not everything that matters to situations and experiences in human life can be directly observed; relevant instances include values, beliefs, feelings, and artistic sensibilities. Second, in such cases, ‘facts’ do not ‘speak for themselves’ when humans study humans: hypotheses and conclusions about observations are made by researchers who cannot be said to be entirely neutral. What seems ‘present’ or ‘absent’ in a situation depends on what observers are able to perceive, which in turn is influenced by what they have learnt and experienced earlier. Similarly, humans organise their thinking and interpretations about observations and experiences around previously acquired knowledge and beliefs about what is (or is not) significant and meaningful. (Hawkesworth, 2014; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Yanow, 2014).

From these objections, two important consequences are drawn; one ontological and the other epistemological. The human sciences often focus on the “specific, situated meanings and meaning-making practices of actors in a given context” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 5). Ontologically, it is assumed that

⁸⁸ Noaparast develops his argument in response to the debate between the sociologist and political theorist Paul Hirst and Wilfred Carr, whose work is in the philosophy of education (see e.g. Hirst & Carr, 2005). In this discussion, Carr insisted that philosophy of education should be grounded in the practical reasoning of teachers themselves, and that this type of reasoning should be considered a branch of practical philosophy. Hirst objected that philosophy, even in the Aristotelian tradition that Carr embraces, is theoretical *per se* and therefore a second-order activity. Noaparast argues that both forms of activity are important in and for philosophy in education, and that they cannot be reduced to one another. Instead, both traditions should be ‘celebrated’ for their respective contributions.

⁸⁹ For this study, overviews by Crotty (1998), Schwandt (2000), and Yanow (2014) have been helpful for understanding the influence of phenomenology and hermeneutics on contemporary interpretive approaches to the human sciences.

meaning-making does take place and that it is indeed possible to study, but not through ‘direct observation’ of presumably ‘value-free’ facts.⁹⁰ Rather than simply describing or trying to ‘explain’ the external manifestations of human experience, the ambition is to understand, comprehend, or in German, *verstehen*.⁹¹ Epistemologically, researchers in the social sciences need to acknowledge that they are meaning-making humans just as the persons they are studying, and that the scientist’s own frames of reference inevitably influence everything in the research process from its motives and purposes to its selection of data, contacts with actors in the study, methods of analysis, and conclusions (see Hawkesworth, 2014, p. 37). In interpretive research, instead of trying to deny, ‘control for’, or eliminate this fundamental condition, the strategy is to work openly with and within it, strive for increasing awareness of the prior knowledge and (tacit) preassumptions which researchers brings to the subject of study and to their fallible sense-making about it, and attempt to gradually improve reasoning and judgments about the adequacy of alternative interpretations (Hawkesworth, 2014, p. 39). In “reflective research”, according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg, any reference made to empirical data is the result of interpretation (2008, p. 20). The researcher engages in a process of active interaction with the participants in the study, constantly selecting, shaping and reshaping interpretations (p. 21).

In research where embedded meanings of texts, practices, traditions or artefacts are studied, there is a similar ongoing, iterative process of making and revising interpretations in the light of new understandings and experiences. In the hermeneutic tradition, this process is seen as cyclic. The parts and the whole of what is studied are continually rethought in the light of each other; hence the term ‘hermeneutic circle’ which also refers to the gradual concentric expansion of understanding. For Gadamer (1975), hermeneutic understanding is not a “procedure” (p. 263) but an “adventure” (1981), “capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon” (pp. 109–110).

The ontological and epistemological preassumptions of interpretive research entail distinctions which go beyond the now familiar taxonomy of ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ research in the social sciences. As pointed out by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), survey-based and interview-based research can share the same realist-objectivist preassumptions, i.e. that research findings mirror a ‘true’, singular world which the researcher can get to know and understand from an objective, outside standpoint. Qualitative methods that emphasise situated knowledge and knowers share a different preassumption which takes the form of a caveat: a situation involving human aspiration and meaning-making can be

⁹⁰ For a discussion of the minimal, “commonsense” or “critical” ontological realism underlying this assumption, see e.g. Maxwell (2012).

⁹¹ The term was first used by Johan Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) and later developed by Dilthey, Weber and Schütz (see e.g. Polkinghorne, 1988; Yanow, 2014).

understood in more than one way. Depending on their backgrounds and perspectives, different persons are likely to tell different stories about ‘what really happened’ in a setting. Therefore,

understandings can only be accessed, or co-generated, through interaction between researcher and researched as they seek to interpret [social, political, cultural, and other human events] and make those interpretations legible to each other (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 4).

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) go on to suggest a three-part taxonomy: “quantitative-positivist methods drawing on realist-objectivist presuppositions, qualitative-positivist methods drawing on similar presuppositions, and qualitative-interpretive methods drawing on constructivist-interpretivist presuppositions” (p. 6). For practical reasons, these compound adjectives are not used in their further argument or in this study. When writing about ‘interpretive research’, I will refer to the last category and its postpositivist epistemological grounds.

Key characteristics of constructivist-interpretivist research projects include abductive reasoning, iterative research designs, and the aim of (co-)generating rich and multilayered insights into particular cases. Abductive reasoning rests on the possibility, and often necessity, of discovering something more and something else than the theoretical background and knowledge initially applied to a context. Instead of searching for general patterns on the basis of logic (deduction) or on the basis of observation of a large number of cases (induction), abduction involves alternation between careful mapping of previous knowledge and new learning which takes place as the researcher is exposed to particular contexts, elements, events and surprises during fieldwork or archival studies (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

Rather than thinking of flexibility as a threat to trustworthiness, the intentional strategy of allowing for iteration in the light of new learning and successive understandings is seen as a mark of quality in interpretive research (Becker, 2009; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). The concern for generating rich and contextualised data involves various strategies for exposure to a “wide variety of meanings made by research-relevant participants of their experiences” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 85). Accordingly, participants are engaged not as passive objects of study, but as meaning-making agents and key experts on what is going on in their own lives. This approach influences the relationship between researcher and researched, who become partners in negotiating research designs and generating of evidence. Trust may be of crucial importance, since an inconsiderate comment or premature interpretation from the researcher can have negative consequences for reciprocity, mutual learning, and the continuity of the entire project.

From a realist-objectivist perspective, the idea of allowing agents to contribute their own understandings of the matter under study may create the worry that what is presented is a polished version of both the participants themselves and

their situations while ‘real’ facts and ‘authentic’ behaviour remain hidden. Interpretive research acknowledges this possibility, but takes a different stance. First, the researcher is bound by an ethical commitment to allow the participants to make choices about what to talk about and reveal, to what extent, and in what way. One of the most important reasons for this commitment is that there may be circumstances in participants’ personal, professional or political life which are known to the participants but unknown to the researcher and may involve serious risk if revelations should fall into the wrong hands.⁹² Second, if the impression during analysis across different sources is that participants have chosen to idealise or exaggerate certain aspects of their situation or conduct, this insight is valuable in itself and may enable a more complete understanding and nuanced interpretation (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 110–111). Multiple presentations and interpretations of the same situation are taken into account and juxtaposed as part of metainterpretation, in the tradition of the Socratic dialogue (cf. Bakhtin, 1984, p. 110).

Considering replicability as a sign of reliability of a study is not compatible with a constructivist-interpretivist approach. Inevitably,

a different researcher with different characteristics and prior knowledge, conducting the ‘same’ set of interviews or examining the same materials, may (co-)generate data that vary in content and form from those produced by another researcher. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 80).

Therefore, in order to provide readers with sufficient grounds to assess the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, researchers in an interpretive study commit to systematic transparency about personal background, prior knowledge and assumptions, research methods, data generation and data analysis. The term ‘data collection’ is primarily compatible with the preassumption that relevant facts can be located in an outside world independent of researcher and researched. A more adequate alternative in interpretive research is to understand data as (co-)generated during the process in which researchers make active contact with persons, documents, artefacts, and other sources of evidence.

When studies involve human agents, observation may be an important part of the active contact between researcher and researched. However, when possible, engaging in conversation with relevant persons has come to be an expected part of qualitative research, whether conversation is carried out as interviews, in focus groups, in written communication, or in some other form. As mentioned earlier, in this study, the concept of ‘conversation’ is understood in a large sense including both concrete and metaphorical meanings. In the following section, I will discuss the background and implications of this wider view.

⁹² See Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012, p. 122).

3.3 Conversation as meaning-making

As discussed in the previous chapters, music school teachers work at the intersection of traditions of different cultural and temporal provenances, each of them with embedded values, requirements, and standards of evaluation. It is also probably fair to assume that experienced teachers have developed their own convictions about right and good aims to pursue in music education and how to pursue them. In addition, each student arrives with a particular set of ideas about what constitutes good music and a flourishing life. According to MacIntyre, the two distinct types of good involved in educational progress are

the goods of skill and understanding at which each type of art and inquiry and the whole sequence of arts and inquiries aim. And there are the goods of individuals, who happen at particular times in their lives to be students or teachers or inquirers. (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 103).

We may expect, then, that traces and voices from a perhaps unprecedented number of sociocultural contexts are present as music school teachers make decisions about what to teach and how.

The classic strategy for understanding a complex situation better by ‘listening to’ the relevant considerations is conversation, deliberation, or dialogue, epitomised in the Socratic method. Interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue about how to proceed in situations permeated by several and perhaps incommensurable values have been discussed by many authors. For example, in philosophy, although the authors differ in their theoretical outlooks and disagree about the possibility and desirability of achieving consensus and on the truth-value of what is agreed upon, there are resemblances in the concerns expressed by Gadamer for dialogical hermeneutics and elenctic dialogues, Habermas for communicative rationality and deliberation, and in Benhabib’s elaboration of Habermasian communicative ethics.

Additional interpretations of how individuals as well as traditions communicate have been offered by dialogical theories that focus on interactional and contextual aspects of human sense-making (Linell, 2009). Dialogical ideas, Linell suggests, have been applied to so many areas of study that one might speak of a ‘dialogical turn’ in the human sciences. The description of sense-making in interaction offered by Linell bears a strong resemblance with Pinar’s ‘complicated conversation’ (see above, p. 74):

When people communicate in situated interaction, their dialogue is not only with their actual interlocutors. There are also ‘third parties’ of different kinds, and one could also talk about a dialogue *with*, not only within sociocultural traditions. While this might seem to be a metaphorical way of speaking, it can be concretized in such aspects of discourse as quotations from virtual participants . . . (Linell, 2009, p. 59).

In this study, ‘conversation’ is understood in both a concrete and a metaphorical sense, both intrapersonal and interpersonal, and as expressed in words, actions, artefacts, and musical activity. Although sociocultural theory or theorists are not foregrounded in this study, the strategy is influenced by the central sociocultural

idea that individuals are constituted by the social and, consequently, that the social is present in the individual. I argue that the ‘conversation’ described in this way is palpable in music school teaching and learning (see above, p. 10). As discussed earlier, the Finnish music school curriculum and its legal framework are in fact deliberately formulated in such a way that teachers are expected to engage in open discussion (see Heimonen, 2003, p. 160). The deliberations on goodness that are of interest to this study can be understood as ‘outer’ conversations as well as ‘inner’ conversations which take place, for instance, when a teacher seems to discuss a decision ‘inside’ his or her own mind.⁹³

A related metaphor is used by Oakeshott (1959/1991, p. 489), who compares education to an initiation into the conversation of humankind, “a conversation which goes on both in public and within ourselves”. Quoting Oakeshott, Swanwick (1996, p. 44) remarks that music and musical sounds are important strands of this conversation; discourse is not limited to verbal language. Understood in this way, ‘talking’ can be done in person or symbolically, for example through sounds, spoken or silently remembered commentary, quotes, artefacts, or policy documents. Traces of culture influence both inner and outer conversation, verbal or musical, and musical sounds as well as “the word” are always “half someone else’s”; someone who cannot always be identified (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293).

For musicians and music educators, there is a concrete sense in which symbolic conversations as well as simultaneous and multivoiced presence of values are manifested. Musical instruments are excellent examples of the metaphorical kind of conversation between human and artefact described by Schön (1987): the instrument ‘answers back’ immediately and audibly to deliberate acts on the part of the musician. Robinson (2007) points out that what is in play in different musics are ruling metaphors from the particular cultures and times in which the music emerged. Moreover, music history is rife with examples of multilayered compositions where traditions and metaphors are deliberately combined and can be seen (and heard) as ‘conversing’ with each other.⁹⁴

In his work on ethics, MacIntyre (e.g. 1981/2007, 1990) often insists that it is crucial to become aware that present-day human beings are living among fragments of traditions and contexts. As a consequence, our sense-making and ability to make judgments about the respective merits of different traditions are likely to be both limited and confused. According to MacIntyre (1990), understanding what is at stake in practices is important not just for making

⁹³ See e.g. Dascal (2005); Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010).

⁹⁴ For instance, the medieval secular motet juxtaposes vernacular text and melody with Gregorian chant from the Latin Mass, and present-day digital remixes can include musical influences from several decades or even centuries. An example of embodied multilayeredness might be a contemporary violinist attempting to express, in gesture and sound, the sense of exquisite elegance and attentive politeness embedded in the 18th century string quartets by Joseph Haydn.

informed choices about what we will find worth our time and effort, but also in order to be able to participate in polemical conversations: to gain a better understanding of ‘who is speaking to whom’ in terms of the identity, continuity and presuppositions of different and perhaps rival participants (p. 196). “A living tradition”, MacIntyre (1981/2007) writes, “is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute the tradition” (p. 222). As suggested by Wertsch (1993), even in speeches given by one individual, “the informed ear can hear a polyphony of voices” (p. 64). I argue that a similar situation seems to exist in music and music education: fragments of traditions and their criteria of excellence continue to live and develop side by side. In many musical styles, synthesis, mixing and innovation are considered marks of ingenuity and creativity; ‘purity’ of traditions is not necessarily a priority in music. However, I am postulating that music educators who are in the process of scrutinising, developing and perhaps changing their work are participating in an ongoing conversation (both concrete and symbolic) about the musical and ‘extramusical’ values and goods that are embedded and defended in practices of music and music education. In this study, that conversation is made explicit and open for analysis.

Conversations on music education

Many traditions for improving teaching and learning involve the seemingly straightforward idea that teachers can learn from discussing their work with colleagues and other people who are relevant to their practice. In *The Culture of Education*, Bruner (1996) emphasises that for school cultures, it is important to create opportunities to think out loud and actively elaborate new suggestions in an atmosphere where ideas are treated respectfully and pragmatically (p. 77). Professional development among teachers, Muijs and Harris (2006) have suggested, is more successful and has more impact on student learning when collegial collaboration is the norm. Ways of working in which deliberate conversation constitutes an important part include classic and more recent versions of reflective practice, action research, teacher inquiry, practitioner inquiry, teacher research, collaborative research, collaborative learning, teacher learning, mentoring, peer mentoring, peer learning, expansive learning, network learning, professional learning conversations, and continuing professional development (CPD).⁹⁵

In music education, ways of developing teaching through reflective practice and similar approaches where conversation is involved have been described in a number of research reports and other scholarly texts. Examples include edited volumes by Burnard and Hennessy (2009); De Baets and Buchborn (2014);

⁹⁵ The literature on these and related traditions in education and educational research is vast (for some recent overviews, see e.g. Avalos, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Craig, 2009; Earl & Timperley, 2009; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014; Kooy & van Veen, 2012; Lyons, 2010; McNiff, 2013; Noffke & Somekh, 2009; Rönnerman & Salo, 2014).

Odam and Bannan (2005) reporting on the *Reflective Conservatoire* project; and, in Finland, Juntunen, Nikkanen and Westerlund (2013). More than twenty case studies of collaborative learning and reflective practice in higher music education have been described in an edited volume by Gaunt and Westerlund (2013). Roulston et al (2005) describe mentoring and research in a group involving university educators and elementary music teachers. Cain (2008) has reviewed and analysed 24 action research projects in music education. Deliberation and critical reflection with explicit reference to the Aristotelian connection between praxis and phronesis are prominent in the theoretical work of e.g. Bowman and Regelski (see e.g. Regelski & Gates, 2009, *Music education for changing times*). Cain (2007) and Haddon (2009) have studied mentoring for trainee music teachers. Burnard and Björk (2010) have examined the potential of teacher-student dialogue and pupil voice for improving music teaching and learning.

One challenge in music education research which involves conversation is that part of what constitutes meaning for teachers and students comes in musical shape, not as words or numbers. For musicians and music teachers, evaluation of quality often takes place as more or less conscious benchmarking against a great number of memories of sound (see Schippers, 2007). What these sounds mean and how their qualities are to be assessed is notoriously difficult to put into words. Although it has been argued (Zandén, 2010) that music educators need to make efforts to retain and develop a professional and collegial evaluative language, not everything important there is to express about music can be captured in words. My understanding is that in practice development, music teachers cannot rely solely on verbal conversation.⁹⁶ Similarly, since much of what music teachers are attempting to accomplish has to do with sound, research on teacher practice in music education needs to pay attention to musical as well as verbal expression.

Referring to the discussion so far in this chapter, the main criteria for choosing a design for the present study have been that the research would (1) involve practice development in which conversation about questions of values and aims is a part, (2) be relevant to the participants as well as to the researcher, (3) allow for iteration and flexibility during the research process, and (4) elicit rich, multilayered data where music or at least references to musical sound can be included. Epistemologically, the knowledge that is aimed for builds on “how and why people make meanings in particular contexts” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. 440). Among the traditions mentioned above, the most promising alternative for this study seems to be collaborative research with elements of practitioner inquiry. The theoretical background for such a method is examined in the following section.

⁹⁶ Words are only one medium for ideas, Dorschel (2010) asserts in his *Ideengeschichte*; for example, he suggests, “musicians think in tones“ (p. 43).

3.4 Collaborative inquiry as practice development and research

Collaborative practice development for teachers can be understood as a spectrum where the most common models include teachers working together (with or without a facilitator) in order to improve collective practices; teachers supporting each other's individual development through reflective work; and teachers or schools aiming to understand, support and improve practices through partnerships with researchers and/or universities. Each of these may involve a continuum of more or less systematic teacher inquiry, ranging from informal discussions about teaching and learning among teachers or between teachers and students to scholarly work intended for international publication, produced by one or several university researchers with teachers as co-investigators and/or co-authors. What collaborative research approaches usually have in common is an appreciation for teachers as agents with important local knowledge.

Fishman and McCarthy (2000) identify two “charter concepts” of collaborative teacher research. The first builds on the work of Stenhouse (1975) who emphasised the production of rigorous, rich and “illuminating” case studies which report systematic questioning and testing of teaching methods. The second, developed by Berthoff (1987), encourages teachers to resist research initiated by outsiders (such as university researchers, especially if the study is informed by positivist preassumptions) and instead transform and create knowledge through the process of writing about their teaching experiences, thereby giving shape (meaning and form) to their own understandings of teaching and learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 15). Although there are important differences between these two approaches, they share an emphasis on knowledge generated when teachers engage in dialogue, and the conviction that “teacher research must be based on *teachers' questions*” (p. 15, italics original). Ghaye (2010) suggests that practitioner conversations need not be deficit-based, as perhaps implicitly assumed when the aim is ‘improvement’. Instead, it can be at least as fruitful to engage in appreciative reflection on successes, aiming for a better understanding of how significant and positive development has been achieved. Similarly, McIntyre and Black-Hawkins (2006) have shown that one key condition for successful school-university research partnerships is to aim at documenting and explaining what the teachers consider valuable practice, taking their own views as starting points (p. 186).

By its inherent nature, collaborative research involves conversation and interpretation. As pointed out by Driel, Beijaard and Verloop (2001), conversations about practice are not automatically helpful or productive. The authors identify four strategies which are potentially powerful: (a) learning in networks, (b) peer coaching, (c) collaborative action research, and (d) the use of cases (p. 137). On the basis of a metastudy on teacher learning, van Veen, Zwart and Meirink (2012) argue against strong conclusions about interventions or programmes that ‘work’ in professional development for teachers, pointing to the difficulty of synthesising results from a great number of different studies

involving dissimilar settings, actors and methods. At best, what can be said about effectiveness is limited to general features, among which content is central: “it is important to focus on the daily practice” (p. 17), but whether the development work is done in the workplace or offsite does not seem to influence the results. Additional important features mentioned are largely consistent with the factors emphasised in the study by Driel et al:

active and inquiry-based learning, collegial learning, a substantial amount of time, cohesion with the school policy and or national policy and at the same time a congruence with the problems teachers experience in their daily life (van Veen, Zwart & Meirink, 2012, p. 17).

Nielsen (2009) asserts that in music education, a clear line needs to be drawn between practice development and research. The practice of music education and the practice of researching music education have different norms, demands, and criteria for quality which may or may not be related to each other (p. 29).⁹⁷ Although this point is valid and important, I argue that some flexibility is required in collaborative research in order to keep research questions and methods relevant to both participants and researcher. Careful consideration of the researcher’s role is indeed central, especially when (as in this study) she represents both the community of music educators and the academic community. While the degree of collaboration can vary throughout co-generation of data, discussion about possible interpretations, and co-authoring of research reports, the researcher needs to take the final responsibility for academic rigor, including ethical decisions, during the entire project.

With regard to modes of teacher inquiry, this study has its closest affinities with the thought of J. Elliott (2000/2007, 2007, 2009), whose work on action research emerged from collaboration between teachers and researchers (among others, Stenhouse) on curriculum development. J. Elliott builds on Gadamer’s interpretation of *phronesis* as hermeneutic understanding of self and others which guides judgment in particular situations. He recommends that teachers engage in reflective processes about their practices, relating practical situations to their own values and beliefs as well as to a variety of other relevant sources (Elliott, 1987/2007, pp. 108–109). His later theorising is explicitly influenced by MacIntyre’s work on understanding and reinterpreting traditions and the goods they embody.⁹⁸ J. Elliott (2007) summarises his own lifelong work in educational research as participation in “conversional communities” (p. x). For him, educational action research always involves moral inquiry, i.e. the

⁹⁷ In action research, where practices merge in the person of the teacher-researcher, this issue can be particularly thorny. Still, Nielsen’s concerns seem predominantly influenced by realist-objectivist presuppositions. The criteria for quality in interpretive research projects as discussed in 3.2 are applicable to action research (see also J. Elliott, 2009; Wilson, 2013, p. 253).

⁹⁸ See in particular J. Elliott (2000/2007).

aspiration towards knowledge of the human good, and a focus on the development of educative action by teachers. This task, he writes,

cannot be accomplished independently of establishing a dialogue with teachers about their pedagogical aims, the practical problems they experience in realising them, and strategies for solving them. Such dialogue in itself constitutes a process of professional development for the teachers involved. (J. Elliott, 2007, p. 7).

According to J. Elliott, the form of educational theory-building and development which is most helpful and credible to teachers is generated in collaborative projects which focus on studying concrete cases. In order to formulate relevant new theory about the goods of education, teachers will also need to “enter into a conversation with past educational thinkers through engagement with their texts” (J. Elliott, 2000/2007, p. 199).

In addition to the elements of teacher inquiry that have been included in this project, the way in which conversation was structured during group sessions was influenced by *reflecting conversation processes* developed in social work and collaborative family therapy from the mid-1980s onwards (see e.g. Andersen, 1991; Anderson, 2012; Anderson & Jensen, 2007; Hoffman, 2007; see also Willott, Hatton & Oyeboode, 2012, for a critical review of empirical research). What these approaches have in common with interpretive methodology is the insistence on thoughtful dialogue as central for understanding another person’s meaning-making, intentions and experiences. Reflecting conversation processes were developed in order to counteract what was perceived as overly hierarchical relationships between social workers or therapists and clients, with the former occupying unrealistic expert positions with regard to the clients’ lives. Building on social constructionist thought, collaborative approaches focus instead on the richness of including different voices and on complex understandings as they are being carefully generated in nonjudgmental dialogue. “Therapists and clients become conversational partners engaged in a shared inquiry” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 364) where the client is understood as a key ‘knower’ in his or her own life.

The relevance of reflecting conversation approaches to the present project is their affinity with collaborative inquiry and interpretive research where accounts of lived experience are taken seriously (see e.g. Wasser & Bresler, 1996, on interpretation as a collaborative act; see also Forsman, Karlberg-Granlund, Pörn, Salo, & Aspfors, 2014). A pragmatic reason for adapting reflecting conversations to data generation in this project was that I had training and experience in this format and felt confident that I would be able to scaffold conversation and elicit rich data with support from the approach. A contextual reason was the connection to Kurkela’s assertions that (a) dialogue is central to the understanding of how conditions for good relationships to music can be created, and that (b) music school teachers can enrich their thinking about

teaching and learning if they “talk things over and examine them together” and “think together” (see 2.4).⁹⁹

In addition to the principles for data generation described above, principles for data analysis have been developed as an extension of interpretive methods developed in policy analysis by Yanow (2000). The intention has been to understand the meanings and values expressed in music school teacher practices as told by music school teachers themselves in dialogue with each other and the researcher, as well as in texts and artefacts related to their practices. In the following chapter, I will set out the research design and research process in more detail and extend the description of how systematic data analysis has been performed.

⁹⁹ However, the study parts ways with the potential relativism in radical social constructionist views where any and all interpretations are equally acceptable. As there are better and worse ways of creating conditions in which good relationships to music can be born, I argue, there are better and worse interpretations of music school teachers’ aspirations. During data generation in this project, structuring group discussions and interviews as reflecting conversation processes has foremostly been a way of answering what Schwandt (2000) refers to as “the fundamental question, How should I *be* towards the people I am studying?” (p. 203).

4. Research design

In order to generate data that would have the potential of deepening understanding of how music school teacher practices develop and what practitioners consider important, I initiated a collaborative project involving a small group of teachers from four different music schools. This chapter guides the reader through the crafting of the project from its initial questions, plans and preparations to its final dialogues with the participants (the stage known as ‘member checking’) and the final elaboration of the written research report. Although the different stages of research were set out beforehand, some new decisions needed to be made during the course of the project. The moments when adaptive changes were made, and the reasons for doing so, are indicated in the description of the research design. The planning and preparation for the study and the recruitment of participants are described in 4.1. The process of data generation is discussed in 4.2, and the concurrent and sequential data analysis and interpretation in 4.3. Finally, in 4.4 and 4.5, I discuss ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Preparing for the study and recruiting participants

During the early planning stages of this research project, the preliminary purpose was to develop and evaluate professional reflection for music school teachers. However, the focus quickly moved towards an interest in what the teachers were doing in order to adapt and improve their practices. While preparing for the empirical part of the study, I made two interviews with the chair of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, spoke with several music school directors, presented the project idea informally to some music school teachers, and discussed the research plan with Finnish scholars who had experience from a previous large-scale music school research project which was initiated in the mid-1990s and continued over more than ten years. During these many hours of discussion, it became clear that things had moved on since the reports on problems and challenges I had been reading (e.g. Anttila, 2004; Broman-Kananen, 2005; Huhtanen, 2004; Lehtonen, 2004; Tuovila, 2003).

What emerged from the initial mapping of the research field was that while some problems prevailed, much was already being done to develop teaching methods and constructive evaluation and to make room for new musical possibilities. The policy of aiming for more flexibility within the rather open framework of national curricula had already generated new practices, such as the possibility of passing an exam by organising a public concert where the student played music from several different genres, accompanied by (or accompanying) friends. Internal tools for quality assessment were being constructed and tried out in practice, many schools had opened up to a wider range of genres and learners, and the directors and teachers I spoke with seemed largely aware of what might have been justified in the critique that had been directed against music school teaching and learning in general. My own experiences as a student in a Finnish

music school dated from the late 1980s and since then, I had been living and teaching in another country for many years. In some respects, I was an insider to the research setting, both as a former student and through the professional education which I largely shared with the participants, but I had also become an outsider. I had limited knowledge of what forms of development music school teachers themselves were interested in, what kind of challenges they were facing, and if there had been problems that were already solved. The well-known symbol for action research seemed valuable for the purpose of the study: a circle or spiral moving from identification of a problem to planning, carrying out and evaluating new modes of working, and finally beginning a new cycle in order to address potential new problems. However, I could not know in advance if the participants had encountered problems; if they had, whether they had made efforts to solve them; and in that case, what stage of the process they were in. If the participants were to engage in teacher inquiry, I would have to wait to learn more about their preoccupations before making further decisions about how to proceed.

Access to the field was facilitated by one music school director who took interest in the project and suggested that I could present the idea at a day-long regional music school seminar in the beginning of the academic year. In a brief talk with the title *Music school teaching between tradition and renewal*, I informed approximately 80 teachers from four music schools of my intention to launch a collaborative research project on teaching and learning in music schools, and encouraged anyone who was interested in participating to contact me directly. I participated in the entire seminar, listening to plenary discussions and talking informally with teachers, answering questions about the project and, in some cases, catching up with colleagues I had met or known while I was still living in Finland. By the end of the day, several teachers had announced that they might be interested in taking part in the project.

Three months later, after receiving permission from all four music school directors, I sent personal invitation letters to the teachers who were employed in the four schools (Appendix A), whether they had participated in the regional seminar or not.¹⁰⁰ Since the study was going to be conducted in Swedish (one of Finland's two national languages and the researcher's first language), the letter was also in Swedish, therefore potentially limiting the selection to Swedish-speaking or bilingual participants. The project was described as a combination of continuing professional development (in Swedish: *fortbildning*) and research. Initially, the project was planned for four participants. Teachers who were interested in taking part were advised to contact me directly via email. All four schools were represented among the five teachers who enrolled. I learned that when the letters had arrived at the schools, the project had been discussed during staff meetings, and the participants later told me that in addition to self-selection, they had been more or less 'voted in', or at least encouraged to join by both their

¹⁰⁰ Some of the teachers were employed in more than one of the schools.

directors and colleagues. Given that the participants knew ahead of time what the purpose of the project was, their possible bias may have been an active interest in practice development. All five teachers who enrolled, four females and one male, were accepted. A summary of participant profiles is provided in Table 1.

Among the participants, there was one teacher whom I knew a little better from summer courses and a recording project 15 years earlier; one I had met when we were both teenagers at a summer music camp; and one whom I knew because we had studied partly during the same time at the Sibelius Academy 20 years earlier. However, I had not had any contact with these persons during my years abroad. The remaining two participants were new acquaintances. The participants all knew each other, some more closely: one had given lessons to another for a while; one had taught another teacher's child. Two of them worked at the same music school at the time of the project but did not teach the same subject.

All participants were Finnish citizens and were teaching both individuals and groups using both national languages (Finnish and Swedish). All of them had at least at some point been students in a Finnish music school, a Finnish conservatoire, and/or the Sibelius Academy. They had extensive teacher experience in Finnish music schools and were well acquainted with both the curricula in use (2002, 2005) and several of the previous ones. Two of the participants had served for some years as directors of their schools and then returned to teaching.

Table 1 *Participants in the study*

Participant	Area(s) of expertise	Numbers of years in music school practice
Teacher 1	Violin, piano, accordion, classical genres, traditional folk music	> 20
Teacher 2	Singing, stage productions	> 15
Teacher 3	Violin, viola	> 20
Teacher 4	Foundations of music (music theory, solfège, music history)	> 20
Teacher 5	Violin	> 20

In preparation for conversations about practice with the participants, I conducted two individual pilot interviews with music school teachers whom I knew personally and who volunteered to talk about their work and professional history. The main feedback-based learning that resulted from the pilot interviews was that I had not been sufficiently aware that my reflective mode of asking and listening might take the conversation into a ‘therapeutic’ direction. Both teachers reported that they had revealed more private details than they had expected. For the first volunteer, this resulted in some regrets, whereas the second volunteer said that there was a degree of “interview hangover” the following day, but overall, the interview situation “had been ok”.¹⁰¹ These experiences were crucial not just for adjusting the pacing and focus of the interviews, but also for developing a clearer understanding that some aspects of music school teaching involved frustration, might feel heavy or too personal for participants to talk about, and would require a particularly sensitive and considerate researcher attitude.

Further preparation included practical arrangements for group sessions, planned in cooperation with a local university which made meeting rooms available and provided administrative support. Prior to the study, funding was secured in order to allow the teachers to participate during their working hours without costs to themselves or their employers. Additional funding also covered the participants’ travel expenses. No financial compensation was offered in return for participation.

4.2 Generating data

The first main body of data was generated during five seminar-like meetings where the five music school teachers and the researcher participated.¹⁰² All meetings took place at a local university and were held between 8.15 am and 4.15 pm with breaks for coffee and lunch. During the first session, the project was introduced and its main questions, which had already been mentioned in the invitation letter, were repeated:

1. According to the national curriculum for music schools, teaching is expected to promote a good relationship to music as well as an autonomous and lifelong interest in music, and to take students’ personal aims into account. How might these curricular aims be realised in practice? What is the role of the teacher?
2. What dilemmas do you encounter in your work and what solutions seem to work well? What do you consider good professional practice?

¹⁰¹ Prior to the publication of this thesis, I received permission from each of the teachers who participated in the pilot interviews to report the observations above.

¹⁰² All five teachers participated in all five sessions with the exception of one teacher who was absent the second time, but had access to the session transcript on the blog and commented on the session there as well as in the group during the following session.

3. How might research in music education support your work as a teacher, and how would you like your experience to inform theory?

The teachers were invited to work with an inquiry of their own related to these larger questions,¹⁰³ and assured that the group (including the researcher) would provide support and a space for reflection throughout the project. Ethical frameworks of confidentiality and anonymity were carefully considered and talked through; this process continued as each teacher chose an inquiry to focus on (see further discussion in 4.4). The participants were asked to think of a situation which they hoped to change or had changed in the past, and wanted to submit to work in the group so that the other participants and the researcher could listen, learn, and comment. The teachers were supported in narrowing in on their inquiries by first making short presentations of their initial ideas, then discussing them with one or two other participants, and finally discussing them again with all the others and the researcher.

The initial researcher role was to provide background information about the project, moderate conversation, and introduce the participants to principles of teacher inquiry and reflecting conversation processes. I presented myself foremostly as a researcher and secondly as a colleague who had taught the piano for many years and was likely to share at least some of the participants' aspirations and concerns. In addition, I mentioned that over the years, my studies in the psychology of music teaching had resulted in a particular interest in collaborative practices and further training in how to facilitate reflecting conversations.

After all sessions, summaries and partial transcripts of the day's discussion were published on a password-protected project blog. On the blog, I also provided brief literature reviews and suggestions for readings on the basis of the teachers' chosen inquiries.¹⁰⁴ The participants were invited to write entries, comments and questions on the blog, and to keep in touch through e-mail with any questions that might come up between sessions.¹⁰⁵ At the request of one participant, questions were provided to scaffold reflection between the first and the second session, for example: What in the situation makes/made you want to try new solutions? Why is this important to you? How would/did you go about making a

¹⁰³ Stake (1995, p. 20) refers to issues brought in by the researcher as *etic* and issues belonging to the actors in the case as *emic*. In this study, the intention was to keep the research questions as open as possible in order to enable accommodation of emic issues.

¹⁰⁴ A literature list is provided in Appendix D.

¹⁰⁵ The initial ambition had been to publish all transcripts on the blog between each meeting. By the third session, this turned out to be too time-consuming and perhaps not entirely necessary, but I kept it up for the first two sessions and eventually published transcripts verbatim when they were ready. As a collaborative tool, the blog lost its importance rather quickly; real conversations were seen as more fruitful by the participants, who also remarked that they did not really have the time to write entries or comments on the blog.

change? Who is/was involved in, or affected by this change? What outcomes are you hoping for? What would be a sign that things are moving in the right direction from your point of view?

During the following months, each participant worked on a chosen inquiry project, generated empirical material, and presented the work in the group. The researcher's role was to structure reflecting conversations, provide practical support for each inquiry, present previous research and suggest readings, and keep a continuous interpretive process going so that ideas that were developed during and between sessions could be woven into the ongoing conversation in the group. Dialogue about ethical issues ran through the entire project as new themes emerged; for example, as one teacher decided to interview young students, there was a discussion about how to talk about this with the parents, how to keep data confidential, and how the researcher would be allowed to use the interviews. Copies of some data generated by participants were handed over to the researcher, while other data remained in the possession of the participants and were submitted to the group only to the extent that the participants found helpful.

Each participant had approximately one hour at her or his disposal in each of the following sessions during which the chosen inquiry was reflected on, methods of data generation were discussed, data were presented, and interpretive work was carried out. Building on the reflecting conversation process format, presentations were generally structured to allow the teacher to both speak and listen alternately, creating time and space to participate in the outer conversation in the group as well as listen to the others and attend to the inner conversation occurring in his or her own mind (Shotter & Katz, 2007). The other group members were asked to maintain an open, responsive, nonjudgmental attitude; to keep their comments nonpejorative; and to stay on topic as closely as possible, even if they had thoughts about how their own experiences related to what was being presented. Table 2 presents the template that was used to structure group reflections. For Shotter (2008) and Anderson (2007), the purpose of the format is to create a stance of "witness":

a way of being with, talking with, acting with, thinking with, and responding with another person. It is a way of being which expresses an attitude of respect, appreciation, and consideration for what the other brings to the encounter (e.g., story, reality, agenda, etc.) that invites collaborative relationships and dialogical conversations (Anderson, 2007, p. 34).

Although presenting participants were free to choose what they wanted to talk about and how, conversations were organised according to a particular time frame which for the purpose of the study was presented as a musical structure.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Bresler and Wasser have also used chamber music as a metaphor for collaborative research taking place in 'the interpretive zone' (Bresler, 2002b, 2005; Bresler, Wasser, Hertzog & Lemons, 1996; Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

Table 2 *Template for group reflections*

Person(s) active	Content and format	Time
Presenting participant	Presentation of inquiry or issue, solo	10 min
All participants	Question and answer session (for clarification only), quintet	10 min
The other participants	Reflections, 'thinking out loud', quartet	10 min
Presenting participant	Reflections, solo	5 min
Researcher	Comments, solo	10 min
All participants and researcher	Discussion, sextet	10 min
Presenting participant	Closing reflections, solo	5 min

The most important advantages of using this rather strict format were that all participants had the opportunity to contribute to the conversation and ask questions that were relevant for them; that there was a check on the researcher whose interventions were restricted and whose comments and interpretations were continuously commented on by the teachers; and that the structure itself secured a constant return to the presenting participant's own reflections and interpretations. In addition to case presentations, texts related to the different inquiries were discussed during every session. The participants were literally leading the way, since suggested readings related to each inquiry had to be searched out by the researcher between sessions, with the result that the process of engaging with texts was always 'one step behind'. Sometimes, the time frame described above was not strictly adhered to, for example in conversations where issues emerged that seemed to engage all participants strongly, or when there was a sense that a story which needed more time was developing. These experiences occurred more often during the last two sessions; on the other hand, by that time, the participants had developed what seemed to be a self-regulating awareness of time frames, sometimes reminding each other to get back to the original track initiated by the presenting participant.

For the researcher, the ambition at this stage of ‘real time’ analysis was to focus on what the teachers highlighted as relevant and to avoid making comments that would close the collaborative interpretive process prematurely. The commitment was to make sure that any comments or suggestions from the researcher were submitted to commentary, critique, and nuancing by the participants. At the same time, in the words of J. Elliott (1987/2007), I was “wrestl[ing] with cases alongside the teacher researchers” (p. 109). Part of the time, I recorded my own ‘inner conversation’ during group reflection as handwritten notes that could be taken up in discussions, returned to later, or used for literature searches.

The same stance of ‘submitting’ ideas to the group was retained during conversations about texts selected by the researcher. Cited studies and scholars were often presented as voices participating in the conversation, for example: “There is a researcher named Lucy Green who has found that learning music in friendship groups can engage and motivate teenage students. Would you like to comment on this? Does it fit with your experience?”

During monthly sessions held between February and May, each teacher’s inquiry was developed step by step in concertation with the group.¹⁰⁷ New layers of understanding, case ‘thickness’ and cross-case discussions were added as the participants shared experiences, video recordings of their teaching, music they had recorded together with their students, interviews with their students, small-scale surveys, and many stories of teaching and learning music. The fourth session was planned to be the last, but the teachers suggested a fifth meeting after the summer in order to present data from planned interviews, have a chance to tie up other loose ends, and get to talk with each other within the group setting one last time. The idea seemed reasonable and consequently a final session was arranged. Although this prolonged the collaborative phase of the project by almost six months, the depth of the conversation and quality of data generated during the fifth session seemed to confirm that there had been good reasons to continue. The session allowed for more elaborate metadiscussion about the project and about each teacher’s practice development in a long-term perspective.

Conversations were audiotaped using a small digital voice recorder which was placed on a desk between the researcher and the participants.¹⁰⁸ All sessions

¹⁰⁷ Exact dates are withheld in order to make it more difficult to identify persons who were involved or mentioned in the project.

¹⁰⁸ Video recordings were also made, serving mainly as technical backup and as a way of securing that voices in the conversation could be distinguished during transcription. Since data analysis did not include visual elements and all voices could be easily identified on the audio tape, the video recordings turned out to be unnecessary and were discarded when all transcriptions were ready. The potentially invasive character of video recording was discussed briefly with the teachers, but one participant’s guess that “we will forget about it” seemed to be confirmed as the focus turned to discussions. There were no particular comments about recordings during the sessions.

were transcribed verbatim with the exception of technical instructions, for example about how to publish blog entries, some (repeated) introductions to reflecting conversation processes, and some of the researcher's presentations of studies related to the inquiries and cross-case discussions.¹⁰⁹

Over the next 18 months, concurrent with data analysis, individual follow-up interviews were arranged with every teacher at a time and place of his or her choice. The individual interviews were semi-structured and included follow-up of the teacher's inquiry and situation; clarification of questions that had emerged during data analysis; some questions about the teacher's professional biography; and evaluation of the project from the teacher's point of view. The researcher's stance was reflective as during group sessions and open to tracks that the teacher might wish to follow.

I also visited each school to present the project, its main questions, and its collaborative stance and methods. The purpose of the visits was to create a dialogue with each teacher's school about the relevance of the project, and to offer a fair opportunity for teachers who had not participated to learn about how collaborative projects could be initiated and planned. In addition to these visits, I was invited for a presentation and discussion of the project at a national seminar arranged by the Association of Finnish Music Schools (SML). A final phase of generating data was related to the concept of 'a good relationship to music' and involved archival searches at the Association of Finnish Music Schools and the National Archives of Finland, informal conversations with the managing director of SML, and a semi-structured, recorded interview with Kari Kurkela; the results of this inquiry have been woven into the theoretical background of the study and are presented in chapter 2.

The main body of data consisted of transcripts from group sessions (25:27:17) and transcripts from individual interviews with each teacher (05:58:49). Data generated by the teachers were included to the extent that they were mentioned during sessions; most of them are therefore part of the group session transcripts. Additional transcripts were made of an interview made by the researcher with Teacher 3 and the director of the music school where he was employed (01:21:22), and of two interviews made by Teacher 1 with five of her former students (02:13:07). Further, complementary data consisted of a recording from a radio interview made with Teacher 1 and her students ten years earlier, electronic correspondence between researcher and participants, and entries, comments and questions published by participants on the project blog. Handwritten notes were made during group sessions, individual interviews, two conversations with the chairman of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, visits at each music school, and a national music school seminar. Finally, the interview with Kari Kurkela was also transcribed verbatim (01:01:06).

¹⁰⁹ A summary of all sessions is provided in Appendix B and a list of literature that was discussed during the project is provided in Appendix D.

4.3 Analysing and interpreting data

Interpretive analysis is iterative, moving forward step by step as the research process ‘talks back’ and gives indications of what to do next. In this study, analysis runs all the way through the research project and has been performed in several stages or overlapping ‘rounds’. Although the manuscript has been written so as to provide the reader with an ordered report of the different forms of knowledge that contributed to the understandings and conclusions of the study, a closer look at the research process shows that interpretation has been both concurrent and sequential. The classic structure of a research paper suggests, for example, that literature reviews are completed before field work and interpretation undertaken only after the field work is done. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014) remark that participatory action research and case study are among the methods in which it is often difficult to separate the processes of generating and analysing data. In addition, analytic activities are not only performed on data but also on readings and on one’s own thinking (p. 158). This study is an example of how commitment to what is significant to participants and attention to deepening understandings can require a layered approach with cyclic revisits to several ‘stages’ of research: literature reviews, mapping of the research context, and interpretations about interpretations.

Five partly overlapping rounds of analysis were undertaken and will be described here with their characteristic stances and methods, and with some examples provided.

The **first round** of analysis and interpretation was carried out ‘in real time’ during each group meeting, as described in 4.2. What the teachers and the researcher chose to bring to the conversation and focus on session by session was seen as initial selection, synthesis and interpretation of empirical material. Comments and interpretations about each case were offered by both participants and researcher, but they were always nuanced, commented on and sometimes discarded by the teacher who was presenting a case, as in the following dialogue about finding the right frequency and ambition for group rehearsals:

Teacher 2: I think that if you had this terrible intensity and rehearsed every week, it would become such a terrible routine...

Teacher 1: Mm.

Teacher 2: ...that you might get tired of this...joy.

Teacher 1: No, no, you don’t get tired even though you rehearse once a week. You don’t . . . But in order to become a professional group and start touring more extensively, we would have to sacrifice family [life] and this ordinary life, too. And I don’t think anyone of us would be willing to do that. So I guess this will have to do.

Typical interventions by the researcher were formulated as suggestions followed by a question: ”This is how I understand what you are saying; what do you think?”; ”Some researchers have thought that . . . does that make sense to you?”

The **second round** of analysis and interpretation was carried out during the work with transcriptions. Since large parts of the transcribing were completed between group sessions, it was possible to perform analysis both during deskwork and in reflective conversations. As remarked by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp. 184–186), transcribing itself is an interpretive process which is influenced by the researcher’s meaning-making; the ambition during this stage was to weave my own interpretive work together with the interpretive work of the teachers. I noted the larger themes that the participants wanted to work on and presented them back to the participants in concentrated form. In addition, expressions that were used frequently were noted and discussed. Interventions were often formulated as in the following examples: “Last time, you spoke about your intention to work with different singing genres and techniques. What are your thoughts now, and what is in focus for you at this point? How would you like to proceed with your questions?” and “Something I noticed while I was transcribing was that you frequently talked about ‘having fun’. I am wondering if you might want to say some more about what ‘having fun’ means to you”.

The **third round** took place during final transcribing after group sessions were completed and during individual, semi-structured follow-up interviews with every teacher. I prepared questions about content and meanings in previous data both for clarification and for collaborative interpretive work. The place in which the interviews were conducted (in the teacher’s home or classroom according to his or her choice) was taken into account: what the teachers said about the environment and what the researcher noticed during the visit added a new dimension to analysis. Interviews were about one hour long. In addition to questions about the teacher’s professional biography, typical questions included: “It’s been some time since we met; where are you at now, what are your thoughts about the project, what current situation is important for you?”, “This is what I have been thinking, feeling and noticing as I listened to and transcribed our conversations; would you like to say something about that?” and “This is how I understand what you said at the time; what do you think about it now?”

Already during the group sessions, the complexity of the aspirations and challenges described by the teachers had made me realise that casting my reports about their work in simple linear narratives would not do justice to the understandings that emerged. Stories about decision-making and solving of practical dilemmas had been told, but there was much more to what the teachers wanted to accomplish, and their reflections seemed far-reaching and sophisticated. During the final transcribing process, as life history data entered the composition, this impression grew even stronger. In order to engage with the increasing complexity and place the teachers’ concerns in a broader conversation, I made the choice of reworking the literature review, taking it into a more philosophical direction. Previous studies about music school teaching and analysis of larger discussions about the value and purpose of music education were juxtaposed and considered together. In addition, the initial plan of ‘writing up’ narratives of the issues presented by the participants no longer

seemed rigorous enough. What the teachers described as significant ranged from the way lesson notebooks were handled to the order in which students performed at concerts, and each such description carried aspirations of its own, connected to larger aims.

At this point, methodological support for further analysis was found in an area that might initially seem somewhat tangential to music education; namely, interpretive policy analysis as described by Yanow (2000). I found common ground between robust praxialism and its commitment “to have what people actually say and do drive philosophical inquiry into the central concepts, actions, social and political factors, values, goods, and harms of musical practice”¹¹⁰ and the commitment in policy analysis to listen to understandings emerging from policy-relevant interpretive communities. In addition, Yanow’s parallel interest in practice-based approaches as well as researcher and practitioner reflexivity (see e.g. Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003; Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009) facilitated my own bridging between music education research and interpretive analysis of practices. For example, the study by Cook and Yanow (2011) on flute-making and the studies by Strati (2003, 2007) on the ‘feel’ developed by workers in sawmills and on house roofs cast new light on the empirical material in the present study and confirmed the relevance of looking for ‘goodness’ and ‘meaning’ as described and aimed for by the participants. This theoretical synthesis led to the most demanding part of deskwork, which was conducted by combining the previously constructed heuristic map of values and goods generally strived for in music education (2.2) with a modified version of interpretive police analysis as described by Yanow (2000) and using these as an analytical grid, bound together by the overarching orientation towards robust praxialism.

The **fourth round** of analysis, then, completed what might now be called *interpretive practice analysis*. In interpretive policy analysis, ‘data’ consist of “the words, symbolic objects, and acts of policy-relevant actors along with policy texts, plus the meanings (values, beliefs, feelings) these artifacts have for them” (Yanow, 2000, p. 27). Using these categories as starting points and extending them after discussion with Yanow, I searched the empirical material for references to what participants seemed to emphasise as meaningful or good by means of (1) using words that signal aspiration, approval, or disapproval, (2) handling an artefact in a particular way or describing the handling of an artefact in a particular way, (3) performing or describing an act, (4) producing or referring to musical sounds or qualities, (5) referring to persons, and (6) telling stories, including references to outer and inner conversations.

Following Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2014), I attended to stories in order to ground interpretations in “people’s understandings of their own contexts”, allowing for “interpretations on interpretations” (p. 352). Stories may of course

¹¹⁰ P. Alperson, personal communication, January 12, 2015.

contain elements from all the previous categories, but during the analysis, I looked for verbal cues that signalled telling of a story or anecdote, for example: “I have to tell you about this time when a student...”, or “I remember that when the new curriculum came, we had a meeting about it. And one of my colleagues said...” (referring to outer conversation), or “Sometimes, I wanted to push the students a bit more. But you can’t drive until it all crashes. So then I thought: ok, let’s slow down a bit...” (referring to inner conversation).¹¹¹

Transcripts were analysed in order to identify meanings conveyed in any of the six ways mentioned above. Particular attention was given to statements which involved aspirations such as “I want the students to have the opportunity to...”; appraisals such as “that is good” or “it is very important”, accounts of issues that participants described as tension-ridden or conflictual, and accounts of the ways in which challenges were handled. The ever-present risk of drowning in data was reduced by limiting the report to references to the inquiries chosen by the participants. Strong shared themes were noted separately and will be discussed in a section of their own.

During the **fifth round**, the research report was written on the basis of the previous rounds of analysis and interpretation, blending voices from the project with author narrative in ‘stories from practice development’ (chapter 5).¹¹² Organising the data in this way added an interpretive phase of choosing what to report and how, editing, and making decisions about what words and phrasings to use and what I would leave outside of the report. Although the purpose has been to form meaningful and nuanced wholes, there is not necessarily a systematic configuration of stories as “plots”, as described by Polkinghorne (1988, 1995). Instead, the aspirations and challenges of each teacher’s practice are illustrated by several stories, excerpts from conversations, comments from other persons, and reporting or commentary by the researcher. All five rounds of analysis are embedded in the stories from teacher practices and all participants have become voices in each other’s stories and in the report from collaborative inquiry.

Participants had spoken mostly Swedish and some Finnish during the project; I made all translations to English, trusting that by this time, my understanding of

¹¹¹ In the reports from sessions and interviews, double quotation marks are used when participants or the researcher cite what they or someone else has said. Single quotation marks are occasionally used for citations within citations when there is a risk of confusion, but also to signal inner conversation, imagined conversation, a sense of ‘so to speak’, or expressions that are not used as the speaker would normally use them.

¹¹² The ‘stories’ in the final reports are not identical with the stories I looked for in the data. They are constructed from all types of references, statements, and accounts noted during the fourth round of analysis. For similar approaches to reporting from teacher-researcher collaborations, see e.g. McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins, Brindley, McIntyre and Taber (2006): *Researching schools. Stories from a schools-university partnership for educational research*.

the teachers' aspirations and concerns was sufficient to convey and interpret what the teachers had pointed out as important. Minor errors were corrected following member checking processes. Finally, in these last analyses, three perspectives were integrated: robust praxialism (2.2), beliefs about music education and the good life and their connections to music school policy (2.3 and 2.4), and the concept of 'creating conditions for a good relationship to music' (2.5 and 2.6). A concentrated version of the research questions was then used: what does 'goodness' in relation to music mean to the music school teachers in this project and how do they strive for it? At this point, it also became possible to form a deeper understanding of both aspirations and challenges in the teachers' work and of how the different reference points from the fourth round were set in 'complex conversation' with each other.

The research report includes both narratives written by the researcher and descriptions of teacher inquiries, and shares certain features with reports from studies that build more systematically on narrative approaches, action research, or case study research. This study is not purely representative of either of those traditions, but is committed to the characteristics of interpretive analysis: iteration, contextualising, dialogue, abductive logic, and aiming for substantive insight.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical principles for research in music education correspond with general principles of research in the humanities and social sciences, which fall into three broad categories: respecting the autonomy of research subjects, avoiding harm, and protecting privacy and data.¹¹³ In addition, handling music and musical sounds requires specific consideration of how to protect confidentiality. In this section, I will discuss ethical issues that were significant for the present study, some questions that occurred, and how ethical principles were brought to the conversation throughout the research process.

Participation in the project was voluntary and the aim of the collaborative project (to increase understanding of how music school teachers develop their practices and how researchers can support this process) was presented on several occasions and clearly described in the invitation letter. Information was provided on how to contact the researcher or the dissertation advisor regarding questions or concerns. On two occasions during the study, the participants asked to be reminded of what my own research questions were; the requests seemed neutral and occurred in conversations about the questions that the teachers were about to articulate for their own inquiries.

The iterative nature of the study required a continuous dialogue with the teachers and other persons involved. For example, general consent to participate did not

¹¹³ Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, <http://www.tenk.fi/en/ethical-review-human-sciences>. Accessed 20.02.2015.

automatically include consent to co-generate empirical material or involve students in the project. Furthermore, the teacher inquiry projects constituted studies within the study and required ethical considerations of their own. These aspects of the research were discussed step by step as the focus of each inquiry became more clear. The degree of confidentiality which was considered appropriate by both researcher and participants was also subjected to discussion, particularly in preparation for teacher inquiry.¹¹⁴ Participants were provided with a letter of information (Appendix C) which included contact information, a brief description of the research project, an explanation that the study would focus on the participating teachers' practices, and information on how to contact the researcher, supervisor, and university responsible for the project. The letter was given to all persons whom the teachers interviewed, observed, or asked to fill out questionnaires; whenever these persons included students under the age of 15, the letter was also given to the students' guardians. During all inquiries undertaken by the teachers, the purposes of both the main study and the specific teacher inquiry were explained.

The principle of avoiding any harm (psychological, social, or financial) concerned the participants, their students, families, colleagues and any other persons with connection to the project. Even if some challenging matters were to be discussed, sustainability was always aimed for with regard to all professional relationships as well as future work and development in each music school. As pointed out by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2009), subjects have the possibility of regulating their own participation "by avoiding matters and questions that they consider damaging or harmful" (p. 8). At the same time, researchers have a responsibility of their own to comply with prevailing standards of ethical conduct, to prevent negative effects whenever possible, and to adopt a stance of honour and respect in relation to participants (see e.g. Josselson, 2007). In this project, the ongoing dialogue between researcher and participants enabled boundaries to be set even minute by minute, as participants were free to talk about what they wished to share confidentially in the group, but could also say at any point that a comment was 'off the record'. During the analysis, it became clear that the significant threads to follow in the data were more than sufficient for the purpose and research questions of the study. As far as I can see, sensitive or controversial issues were not avoided as a rule in group sessions or individual interviews, and there was no apparent need to contest the limits set by the participants. I have included some notes of what might have been talked about but seemed absent in a way that struck me as conspicuous; none of these notes have a connection to any issues that the teachers asked me not to write about or that I chose to omit for the sake of confidentiality or because they did not seem necessary for the purpose of the research.

¹¹⁴ Transcribed records of all conversations related to personal integrity and other ethical issues are included in the data.

For Lankshear and Knobel (2004), “researchers have an ethical and professional responsibility to those who participate in the research to produce a study that is worthy of their time, goodwill, inconvenience and trust” (p. 85). Teacher inquiry may place rather substantial demands on participants’ time and effort. The limits of the teachers’ input were discussed several times, especially in the beginning of the project. In part, it proved difficult to know in advance what would be experienced as too much of a strain; for example, making interviews, informing parents, getting access to a laptop, or handling the project blog. I removed practical obstacles whenever possible and offered to assist the participants with any parts of their inquiry where they said I could help; for example, I made one interview together with a participant and also transcribed interview data in two cases. During the first session, one participant raised the question of “how big this needs to be”; I responded that everyone was free to make own decisions about how to work with the chosen inquiry, and that it was important that the project did not interfere with daily commitments or become burdensome in other ways. During the third session, the same participant described the data that would result from her interviews, and noted: “That will be enough for you, [Cecilia]”. This comment reassured me that through our discussions, the teacher had taken charge of what seemed reasonable both in terms of what she thought I needed to know and in terms of what she was willing to provide.

The balance to be attained during the project was between the researcher’s interests and the teachers’ experience of participating in something that felt rewarding and helpful. Maintaining this equilibrium proved to be a dynamic process. Particularly in the beginning there were some signs that the participants felt that they had been cast as assistant researchers.¹¹⁵ Later in the project, their own conversations about practice dominated and there were expressions of satisfaction with the development process and group work (see 5.7).

The question of how ownership of collaborative inquiry would be defined surfaced again when a preliminary research report was included in a conference paper. The participant whose work was discussed in the paper expressed the wish not to be presented anonymously, arguing that the ideas described were part of an original teaching method which should be given due credit and respect. In this case, a compromise was made: the teacher’s name was mentioned, whereas a number of details were changed in order to protect the anonymity of the school, the students, and the other participants in the study. In the main study, however, all names have been omitted.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ For example, one participant informed respondents that she was involved in a research project and investigated an issue “close to her own heart”, but “on behalf of” the researcher.

¹¹⁶ Studies where the identities of teachers or artists are not disguised include for example Hyry (2007) on Matti Raekallio as a narrator and interpreter of his music teaching, and Burnard (2012) on unique and distinctive creativities in musical practices. In retrospect, the inventiveness demonstrated by the teachers involved in this study could have warranted a similar approach, but since confidentiality was established as a rule from the

The confidentialisation process needed to be carefully considered: while direct identifiers were removed, the report includes indirect identifiers such as the teachers' areas of expertise, artistic projects potentially known to the public, and specific situations which led the teachers to develop their practices in sometimes distinctly original directions. Exaggerated masking would have distorted the description of practices and impeded on trustworthiness. The identity of students, on the other hand, has been systematically disguised. Although in some instances it might have been interesting to juxtapose the teacher's aspirations with the local curriculum, such discussions have also been omitted in order to make it more difficult to identify music schools. Similarly, it might have been tempting to include musical recordings in the report; however, music and musical sound can provide easy ways of identifying both participants and students. Readers who are familiar with the schools, teachers, students, and various projects in the study may (perhaps inevitably) recognise some parts of the descriptions included. The participants knew some of each other's students, and there was general awareness in the schools of which teachers were participating in the project. The following dialogue, recorded during a group session, illustrates and sums up the position taken by the teachers:

Teacher 3: We are also exercising a public profession, so this is not about private things which...I don't think we have any major...

Researcher: Secrets?

Teacher 3: Yes, I don't have any major secret.

Teacher 2: Neither do I.

Teacher 4: It's more a question of the students'...

Teacher 2: Yes, that is exactly it.

[expressions of agreement in the group: *yes, hmm, yeah*]

Researcher: Yes, that is the most important ethical question. [To Teacher 1] Did you want to..?

Teacher 1: No, that was precisely what I [was about to say]. The students.

During the project, all transcripts and research logs were written on password-protected computers, and paper copies as well as other documents regarding the project were kept in a safe place known only to the researcher. The project blog was password-protected and accessible exclusively on invitation from the researcher. Given the confidential relationship formed with the participants and the interpretive stance adopted throughout the project, the data used in the present study are not likely to be replicable and will not be archived for secondary research. However, participants kept the data they generated and can make the decision to include them in future research of their own; three of the

start of the project, changing the general approach would not have been acceptable. However, each teacher retains the ownership to his or her own work through its public aspects and through the possibility of further dissemination through interviews, teacher inquiry, or continued participation in scholarly studies.

teachers discussed the possibility of developing their inquiries into academic publications.

Prior to submission of the manuscript, each participant was engaged in ‘member-checking’ (Schwartz-Shea, 2014; Stake, 2010) through reading and commenting on the written report from his or her practice. Simultaneously, there was a final dialogue with each participant about the ethical principles which guided the entire research process.

4.5 Trustworthiness

The central idea in interpretive research is that the researchers are their own primary ‘instruments’, fallible through their prior and unfolding understanding and knowledge, and/or lack of the same. Instead of a ‘contaminant’, the humaneness of the researcher is considered an indispensable part of situated, context-bound sense-making and knowledge production. Central among criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and high standard in interpretive research is explicit and thoughtful checking of the researcher’s sense-making (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 100). Checking processes run through the entire design of this study, beginning with discussion of open concepts and heuristic theoretical mapping of goodness in music education, and continuing with a commitment to transparent reflexivity during several cycles of interpretation in collaboration with the participants, including follow-up interviews and member checks. New and historical interviews with students and other persons who had experience of the teacher practices discussed were also taken into account. Different sources have been engaged during data generation, including policy documents, archival documents from the Association of Finnish Music Schools, and interviews as well as informal conversations with persons involved in Finnish music school policy.

During the entire main data generation phase, the participants were active in reflective conversation about each other’s work, asking for clarification and suggesting alternative interpretations. No classroom visits were made in order to compare the teachers’ self-reports with observation of their work, but some video recordings of their work with students were viewed in the group; importantly, the focus of the study was to understand the teachers’ aspirations and challenges through their own accounts, not to analyse their everyday work. The main collaborative project extended over a period of ten months and involved teachers who were at least partly familiar with each other’s work and came into contact with each other on a regular basis outside the research project. I consider it unlikely that significant distortions or serious misunderstandings about the teachers’ work and aspirations remain in the research report; further and additional interpretations are certainly possible.

The claim that knowledge of how music school teachers’ practices develop has been furthered in this study rests partly on the quality and adequacy of the conversation between participants and researcher and partly on the credibility of

the final report, which represents the researcher's detailed account of interpretations and new understandings. An important sign of trustworthiness is that members of the music school teacher community can meaningfully recognise some of their own lived experience in the practice stories (see e.g. Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, pp. 19–21). The final evaluation of how well the study has succeeded in this respect and in terms of applicability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) must be left to the readers. However, interpretations were exposed to the practitioner community long before final member checking and publication: as described above, during all group meetings, the five music school teachers who participated continuously evaluated the relevance of interpretive comments. In addition, throughout the research process, the study has been presented and discussed in broader communities with knowledge about music school teaching and learning: the participants' own schools; the Association of Finnish Music Schools; the European Music School Union; the doctoral seminar for music education research at the Sibelius Academy of the University of Arts Helsinki; peers engaged in other research projects with connection to Finnish music schools; and at several national and international conferences on music education research.

Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2014) caution researchers that “there is a continual risk of asserting more clarity and pattern than actually exists in social life” and therefore “in interpretive research, writing cannot be separated from analysis” (pp. 340–341). The stories presented in the following chapter are written by one researcher and thus inevitably shaped by my own experiences, readings, perceptions, and selection of what seemed particularly interesting both in terms of etic and emic questions (Stake, 1995), but the understandings that emerged during the process were also influenced by continuous conversation with actors in the field.

5. Stories from developing teacher practices

This chapter contains reports from each music school teacher's practice (5.1–5.5), including brief biographical narratives. The stories build on data analysis as described in 4.3, focusing on descriptions of aspirations, challenges, and the ways in which the teachers have attempted to defend and extend what they believe is good and important both in the particular musical practice they represent and in terms of human flourishing. Excerpts from group sessions and interviews are distinguished through use of quotation marks or a smaller font size. Quotes follow the verbatim transcripts closely but are not always literal; sometimes shorter quotes have been combined thematically and/or follow each other in one sentence or narrative.

Each section that focuses on one of the teachers (5.1 to 5.5) has a concluding analysis section in which the constructed narrative is 'listened to' against the presented theoretical background. Shared or 'cross-case' themes are presented in 5.6. Finally, reciprocal learning that emerged from the collaborative project is discussed in 5.7.

5.1 Teacher 1

I have been thinking that the most important thing is that they become so inspired that they keep playing for the rest of their lives. That is what is most important.

Teacher 1 is a well-known musician in her region and a celebrity within her area of expertise, which is a particular Finland-Swedish folk music tradition with roots going back to the 18th century. She started to play a miniature accordion at the age of four and the piano at the age of six. Very early, she became involved in the folk music of her village, including a rich and complex aural tradition of fiddle playing. Until her generation, playing the fiddle was essentially a male occupation. In the Finland-Swedish folk music tradition, although there were some rare exceptions until then, women had been expected to sing rather than to play instruments. "My mother was hardly ever allowed even to try the fiddles," Teacher 1 says. The instruments were "sacred", and supposed to be played on only by older males.¹¹⁷

In addition to her folk music practice, Teacher 1 also studied classical music both privately and at a local music school and then went on to complete a master's degree in music education at the Sibelius Academy. Her parents were happy about her playing, but more ambivalent at first about her choice of becoming a professional musician:

I talked to my parents about getting a grand piano, and they did not really react. For Christmas, they got me a Singer sewing machine. What the heck was I going to do with a Singer sewing machine? And the next Christmas, they gave me a mangle. My father once said: We could have supported you more.

¹¹⁷ "The old blokes": in Swedish, *gubbarna*.

Still, her father travelled with her to Helsinki for the entrance exams and helped her carry the heavy accordion. During the audition, she did not limit her programme to the customary classical repertoire, but performed music from her own folk tradition, which in those days was “a sensation; I think they had never heard that before”. The jury was appreciative and “thought it was great fun and, in that way, entrancing. Later, I got to play the accordion at the Rector’s retirement... [or] some celebration that same autumn”. Her accordion studies at the Sibelius Academy were predominantly classical: “So I learnt how to play scales in the left hand, and that was good, because I had no idea [laugh]. [The accordion teacher] appreciated what I did”. Her piano teachers, however, “thought I had a lot of problems with technique. There were many things I hadn’t been taught and had to start addressing. It was like starting all over again”.

Some years after graduating, Teacher 1 returned to her home region and took up a post at the local music school, teaching classical violin and piano while successfully keeping up her folk music practice, initiating some groups of students into the local tradition. At an unusually young age, she was given the rare honorary title of *mestaripelimanni* (in Swedish: *mästarspelman*), awarded at a major Finnish folk music festival each year since 1970. As the title indicates, it has usually been reserved for men, the proportion of female recipients remaining below 5%.¹¹⁸

In several respects, then, Teacher 1 has been unusual. As one of the female pioneers in her generation, she challenged the customs and influenced the emergence of a new place for women in her folk tradition; and as a young folk musician firmly committed to learning the tunes of her village, she has spent many hours of playing together with older fiddlers. Crossing the boundary to what was at the time an institution completely dominated by classical music, she entered the stage as a representative of the music which was closest to her own heart. And as a thoroughly ‘bimusical’¹¹⁹ practitioner, she has taught several generations of young students to perform both classical music and folk music, including dances associated with local traditions.

Teacher 1 says that her reason for participating in the research project is that after some years of administrative work, she needs something new.

I am a curious person. I have a thousand ideas, but as we all know, one can’t engage in many ideas at once but one at a time, or two at the most. But I have plenty of ideas all the time and I question quite a lot, why this, why do we do things this way. And I go my own way, because I am a lone wolf.

¹¹⁸ The official title in English is Master Folk Musician, but *Mestaripelimanni* and *Mästarspelman* translate literally as “master playing man”.

¹¹⁹ Building on the term ‘bilingual’, the adjective refers to a person who is proficient in two musical traditions, owning competencies which are solid enough to be recognised in their respective musical communities (see Schippers, 2010, pp. 114–115).

During conversation in the first session, Teacher 1 explains that teaching and learning in groups is a matter close to her own heart. For her, the most important part of the process is to keep group members and herself “inspired” so that they “have the energy to keep going”.¹²⁰ This is no easy matter and several groups have “died out”, but the aspiration seems to have been achieved particularly well in one of her student groups which keeps performing traditional fiddle music even though the students graduated from the music school several years ago. She decides to aim for a better understanding of what has contributed to the sustained interest, quality of playing, and unmistakable joy in the group: “They inspire each other. And they inspire me. We inspire each other every time we meet.” Since she has experience and material from nearly 20 years of work with the same students, the inquiry seems rich and meaningful to her and to the other participants.

In the second session, Teacher 1 presents and comments on questions that she wants to use for interviews with her students. The questions seem to fall into three main categories. First, there are reflections of the teacher’s own speculations about what might have influenced her students’ long-term interest in music: their own desire to play, parental wishes, choice of instrument, musical roots in the family, first strong musical experiences, the degree to which the students were allowed to influence repertoire at the music school, their experiences of being a music school student, and their experiences of playing in a group versus playing alone. Second, there are questions about folk music, its status at the music school, its relation to classical music, and playing together with several generations of musicians. Finally, there are questions about the history of the group, the meaning of playing, and the teacher’s hope for her students.

What factors made our group into what it became? Do you think we might have become a professional group?

How has our folk music group influenced you generally? Your life? What you are doing today? What you have done socially?

Is music a pastime for you? Does music have a deeper meaning for you? Can you live without music, without making music?

What musical dreams would you like to realise?

Do you think you will still be playing when you reach retirement age?

Do you introduce your child to music? Would you like your child to play an instrument? Would you like it to be the violin?

During sessions 3, 4 and 5, the story about teaching and learning in a successful folk music group born in a music school is woven together from collaborative conversations between participants and researcher. The students’ voices are present through taped excerpts from two interviews made between sessions and one radio interview made 10 years earlier, when the group had its first

¹²⁰ In Swedish: *så att de orkar*.

breakthrough. These interviews are listened to and commented on during sessions. In addition, the participants and the researcher listen to several musical recordings made by the folk music group.

What emerges is the story of a teacher who has struggled to “stay alive” and “find energy” for herself and for her students at the periphery of an institution where the music she is committed to has not always been recognised or supported, although “things have changed quite a lot since the 1990s”. She is aware of the value of the musical tradition that she represents and of her own capacity to inspire students. However, the music school cannot provide the best conditions for the “joy, spontaneity, and enthusiasm” towards which she aspires. One solution has been to challenge the physical frames for teaching and learning. While part of her lessons are held at the school, she teaches some groups at home: in the house she and her husband have built for the family in her home village, and in the large music room where she does her own practising, arranging and composing. From the windows, there is a view down to the small house where she first heard fiddlers in her childhood.

What we are playing is a style, and it is transmitted from the old blokes I played together with. So I almost see that old bloke in front of me as I play, and sometimes one of them joins us for rehearsals. It is direct transmission. I can't just sit and watch as the students play, that drives me mad. I need to participate.

The group whose trajectory is analysed consists of five female violin students and the teacher herself. They all know each other well and speak their local Finland-Swedish dialect together. From the beginning, the reason for working in a group was to provide the students with an opportunity to practise their classical repertoire together, while alternating with some folk repertoire. “But after a while, for some strange reason, the girls liked [the folk music] better.” Since the music school did not at the time accept folk music rehearsals as ‘chamber music classes’, the teacher decided to find other contexts for the playing: “You have got to get response somewhere in order to keep going. [To feel] that you are good enough”. One solution has been to play a lot of gigs and to find opportunities to travel. Invitations have taken the group to many parts of the world including Russia, Australia, the United States and Canada. During the study, the group is planning to combine a tour in Canada with boat trip from Vancouver to Alaska: “to see those glaciers while they still exist”.

The projects carry you. Having a mad vision is how you keep going in life. You can't force a human being. But with a tour coming up, with some crazy project, they all have to get their act together and practice. That's how you get faster and more skilled.

Travelling has been very significant in the life of the group, adding motivation but also opening new perspectives on life and music, allowing both teacher and students to “see the world”. Sometimes, the initiative or “insane idea” has come from the teacher:

Like when we went to Australia. We were sitting in that classroom looking at [a picture of] a kangaroo, so I said, what if we went to Australia to see those kangaroos in

real life? So we did. But of course, it took several years. But that is what is so fun, when you finally take off.

Other times, there were invitations, sometimes “from places you didn’t even know where they were on the map. Of course that is inspiring!” The students say that they were young and “rather naive” on their first tours and “didn’t know much about the world”. Gradually, they have learned how to handle official receptions, “meeting a lot of people”, “how to talk with dignitaries”. Stage performance “ends up becoming a habit”. The teacher notes that many things are learnt at the same time: “focusing, making sure you have the time to tune the violin, eat, do your makeup, get to wherever you have to be”. She has seen her students develop and become more bold in general as well: “The whole person grows”. Performing for appreciative audiences seems to have changed how the students think and feel about their own playing. The tours have an impact both before and after the travelling itself:

You have got to have something [to look forward to], even if it’s a bit tough in the middle of the winter and not everyone has the energy to practise. After the trip, it’s easier, it has given those kids something extraordinary. And if they were thinking of quitting, now they don’t know what to think. All that excitement, the feeling of togetherness, and all those people listening to them playing...

The students also have come to understand music-making in another context than the necessary grind with technical exercises and the regular, long-term practising which, according to the teacher, is “the most difficult thing they need to learn”. What she wants her students to experience is “that spontaneity, the response from the audience, when everyone starts to talk with each other and makes little jokes...that’s when it gets real fun”. The word ‘fun’ comes back regularly in all interviews and conversations. Having fun while playing is described by the teacher as “euphoria”, “purification”, “like when you have been ice swimming and in the sauna”.¹²¹ The teacher uses the expression “shared joy is double joy”¹²² as she refers to moments of nonverbal joyful contact, “you share something, you look at each other and laugh”. Her students describe similar experiences: after rehearsals, although there may be physical fatigue, “you just sing and hum and laugh in the car driving home, feeling energised”. Music is “like a need”. Teacher 1 adds: “Even if I have been angry or in a bad mood during the day, I get [to the rehearsal] and suddenly...it’s such fun to play again, I feel...I am like a new person”.

Teacher 1 believes that folk musicians have struggled to gain recognition for reasons related to musical quality and associations to an old-fashioned style:

¹²¹ Swimming in the sea or in a lake during winter when the water is frozen over is a popular tradition in Finland, practised for the reported boost of energy and for health reasons. The ice is broken to form a hole and the swimmer takes a dip in the cold water. Having a sauna in connection with the ice swimming is often part of the tradition.

¹²² In Swedish: *delad glädje är dubbel glädje*.

People used to think that a folk musician did not really count. At least when I was young. A folk musician doesn't play in tune, holds the violin incorrectly, arrives wearing traditional socks, and needs a note stand [laughs in the group], and the sound is so-so. I don't want that feeling. I want [my students] to play in tune and with precision, by ear or from the score, and to have a steady ground for their playing. It's about status. I want them to have the training that everyone gets at the music school.

The teacher and her students have challenged the stereotypical conceptions of folk musicians in several ways. First, they have aspired towards a synthesis between the perceived goods of classical violin playing as described above (excellent technique, precision, playing in tune) with the perceived goods of folk music, allowing one tradition to criticise the other. One of the students refers to classical music and folk music as "different worlds which work in different situations". Among the goods of folk music, the students mention features of the music itself which is described as more "free" and "full of feeling"; "much deeper" [than classical music], "joyful", "lively", "easy-going", "melodic". Folk music, according to the students, has "schwung"; a term which has entered Swedish via the German language and is hard to translate but refers to a combination of speed, swing and energy: "Lots of sound and lots of parts, that's when it gets fun". In addition, goods related to performing style are mentioned; in particular, the students point out that there is no obligation to stand still. "Classical music is more strict and stern, like you have to square your shoulders and stand with your back straight". During performances of folk music, on the contrary, musicians are free to "show the joy of playing"; "move your body as you play", even "beat time with your foot", which one student says that she was criticised for by jury members when passing a classical violin exam: "They said they could tell I had been playing folk music and that I needed to do something about that foot". Another student says that she needs to move in order to internalise rhythm: "I can't feel it unless I have it in my body, expressing it through my body". In the teacher's opinion, movement, music and feeling are connected: "nowadays, people actually play Baroque music in quite the same way as folk music".

Second, the teacher has challenged the custom of wearing traditional costumes during performances, limiting their use to particular occasions such as formal representation abroad. "I stopped doing that. It felt like wearing working clothes. I was sweating in them and was tormented. You nearly had a sunstroke sitting there during festivals waiting for your turn. I remember how I loathed that hat." For the students, it has been important to "break the pattern" of something old-fashioned and show that "you can be stylish and play folk music", wearing clothes that are "cool, beautiful, varied; evening dresses, everything".

Even though making music is experienced as the central activity of the group and enjoyable in itself, both teacher and students mention that all the things they do together have mattered to the longevity of the interest of making music in a group. The way in which parents engage can also be decisive, according to the teacher: "driving their children, coming to their concerts, making plans, going

out to have pizza, taking pictures, organising trips. It needs to be that way". For the students, encouragement from the teacher has been crucial:

Student 1: I don't think I would have had the energy unless you had been my teacher. You encouraged me a lot. Sometimes I was actually pretty close to quitting, there was such a lot of work at school and I have always been active in everything at the same time. But you always helped me find the energy to keep going, and that was great, because now I feel really good about it.

Two other students say that although travelling has been great fun, simply doing something together has value: "just talking, that is therapy too". At the music school, they did not know the other students. "Getting to know each other and becoming a group makes it more fun to practise." The light-hearted spirit and humour in the group counteracts stage fright: "You don't have to sit backstage worrying about the performance". Playing in a group also means "eating out, going to pop concerts, getting clothes [for the gigs] together, helping each other to see what fits, borrowing clothes from each other, and planning together". Questions about what to wear may seem like a "ridiculous thing", the teacher says, but for teenage girls, "it is extremely important" and some of the time in the group has been spent making decisions about styles and looks, particularly before gigs abroad. Playing with musicians of all ages is enjoyable too, they say:

Student 2: You admired the older fiddlers, it was great to see what they were able to do. [And] playing with younger [violinists] reminds you of what you were like at that age, when you didn't quite dare to let go on stage. It's fun to drag the young ones along and show that it's ok to smile a little and to move a little.

Sharing life with other musicians from different generations is one of the strong memories from the teacher's own years of playing and touring with other fiddlers when she was a child.

It was an excellent education to spend time with these old blokes. They told us funny jokes, and we played music, and we laughed. And when we travelled, I received the best possible education about alcohol. I could see what was too much because at some point, they would make total fools of themselves. And then the day when we were to take a picture for our first album. One of those blokes, he stood there playing and jumping, waiting for the photographer. And then he said: I think the fiddle cracked! But that was his heart cracking. He had a heart attack and fell on the floor. And then he died. You got acquainted with so many things at the same time. This is really from the cradle to the grave, as [my musician friend] said. Right there, an old bloke died...and he loved playing and he died among us. You learned about life in a very concrete way. It's good to hang out with old blokes. It is. I know it.

One of the teacher's important aspirations is that her students might get "that drive"¹²³ which makes them continue their lifelong musical learning, "get joy out of the playing themselves" and perhaps "go travelling, be together with some group of people". She wants her students to have the opportunity to experience that life is full of vitality and fun: "That is, I think, the meaning of life, that you have fun". High standards and striving for professionalism are constantly present

¹²³ In Swedish: *det där stinget*.

for the teacher; hard work, honest feedback and regular rehearsals are important. But things do not always work out as she wants. She needs to compromise, be careful not to give critique that might be taken personally, and have the patience to “back out, and wait”:

Sometimes I am perhaps a bit irritated. Then I think: Well, what is most important? Should we stop completely? Will that be helpful for me? Is it fun to stop altogether? Or should we just let it be, take it a little easier, and see where that takes us? If you press them too hard, they might quit. And having nobody to make music with is no fun either. Those huge demands, you have got to let them go or you would die. Or stop. You have got to ease it through, or to negotiate sometimes. The waves go up and down. You need to make things a bit smoother. Because otherwise, [the students] will stop anything they are doing, and then they start something new, and then they stop again. In the end, they have no idea what they are really doing.

Other important components of making things work include quality of equipment: “good instruments, good microphones” and careful marketing: “radio, television, makeup, styling”. Concert programmes need to be varied, never boring, and involve elements of surprise: “something nobody would have expected”. Teacher 1 notes that although she was sceptical in the beginning, she went along with her students’ idea of making a remix of a tune, adding a contemporary pop sound.

I gave it some thought, because I was afraid of ruining [the music]. I have been a bit conservative about what you can do with these old tunes. On the other hand, I have classical training and some of the things I emphasise are from the classical tradition, or I have another idea that I have heard somewhere. So clearly, I add some things myself to the genuine [style] which has existed before. But why not? You can play it twice. First one version the way it is always played, and then a remix the second time.

Both the teacher and the students think that they might have made a professional career out of playing in the group. However, the idea of living closely together, travelling constantly and sacrificing family life felt too heavy: “You would have had to deny yourself the usual, everyday life. And I don’t think any of us would have wanted that. So I guess this is fine as it is”. Eventually, “playing is what matters, to get together and play”. What is “seen from the outside, whether we do gigs here or there or go on tour is really a minor issue”. Having new projects and plans is crucial, but the main motivation for the teacher is the music itself:

What keeps me going personally is to learn all of those old tunes before I die. And I would like to get my own arrangements on paper, and make another recording. Get the music to survive. You are a chain in several centuries [of tradition]. I really like those tunes a lot. They get to me, those complicated tunes of ours. Maybe I wouldn’t have the energy to play the same amount of tunes from another region. These are the ones I am born with. There is something in the style itself, and what I learnt at a young age is inside me, and that is what is talking, and that is what I want to teach. Especially those old wedding dances, they talk, there are commas and full stops, and you can really hear how they boast, it’s a little like an opera. We fantasise about what we are playing, at least I do. The feeling that this, now this is the old lady who is irritated at her old husband, and now there is an answer...

At this point in the story, the researcher and participants ask to hear an example. Teacher 1 chooses one of the group's recordings of a favourite dance tune: "There is nothing as fun as playing this dance. It's delightful". The music is followed by cheers, laughter and impressed comments; there is a sense that what Teacher 1 has been attempting to say in words now has been made evident through the music. She explains:

You have got to learn it by ear. The accents, the pauses, and dotted notes...and sometimes hurrying to the end of the phrase [sings]. And then it starts over...[laughs in the group]. It really is very talkative...that's what's fun about this. The older I get, the more I think that this is what I need to be doing. The tunes from my own region are amazing. Some of them seem to tell a whole life. I enjoy teaching piano and classical violin as well. But there are many others who can do that. Somehow, there is nobody else who can teach these weird tunes [laughs] which have neither head nor feet.

What the students say confirms that the teacher has succeeded in her aspiration to transmit what is fun and inspiring in and about the musical practice. When asked about early strong musical experiences, one of them says: "Well, that was [Teacher 1]; she was the entire experience". Another student talks about her relationship to the music that the group plays: "It is as if there was hope [in the tunes], something old, something that speaks to you, you feel that there is something that belongs to you".

After hearing the recording, Teacher 3 comments:

There is such a lot of good music, but sometimes you listen and you think: that guy, dammit, he doesn't feel the music.¹²⁴ It's so boring. But you really feel your music and you feel that it is yours, and I understand that you like it. As do those girls. They have such a lot of energy that you expect them to come out of the radio.

Teacher 2 comments on the teacher's work:

You have given these girls a lifeline. They have something that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. This is extremely important for them. They will never forget this. And what's most fantastic is that you will be associated with what you like most of all. You have found your focus. And that is...I hope the rest of us...I hope I will find it too, someday.

For Teacher 1, 'goodness' is partly about the music itself and partly about "energy", "feeling alive" and "doing something that is really fun", which can be accomplished by playing, but not just any music. What counts are the tunes that she cares about; to keep them alive and to feel alive through them. In this way, music also helps in life, because "that is what being a human being is like. You live your life, and you have to absorb what happens to you, try to manage. Stay cheerful every day". Music has a nourishing capacity: "You have to get something for yourself, something that goes into you".

¹²⁴ Teacher 3 refers to the Finnish verb *tuntea*, which can translate as 'know', 'sense', 'feel', 'identify', 'recognise', and 'be acquainted with'; all of which are appropriate in the context and bring out the embodied character of understanding music and sensing one's own and the music's vitality.

According to Teacher 1, the routines of a music school are not sufficient to create the conditions for the lively and energetic core of music-making: “If I had been just an ordinary music school teacher I think I might have been half dead by now”. What she thinks is needed exceeds what is expected of her in the teacher role as well as the time and effort for which she receives financial compensation. Creating a space for the activities and practices that she believes are important has been a way of “surviving” for herself, and she notes: “What I am doing lives best outside the music school”. In fact, “we get the best results if we stay free from most [frameworks]”. A certain degree of autonomy spares both the teacher and the students from “comments” and other forms of social control. The problem with the music school is not necessarily the colleagues, but the way everyday work is structured:

You don’t get a lot of energy at a working place. Everyone potters about with their own stuff. You walk around carrying a cup of coffee. The only people you meet are the students. Communication with colleagues is through the computer. We are losing contact with each other. The others feel the same way.

Developing a defensible music school teacher practice, as described by Teacher 1, involves a balance act. There is the inevitable teaching of basics, the everyday grind:

Now hold the violin like this, now play the open A string to find the first finger, now is that in tune? And you keep doing that for years. You say the same things a thousand times, and you have got to look just as cheerful every time you say it.

But getting to the music-making and “the real fun” is central, and the teacher needs to be communicative: “It’s got to be glowing up here [gesturing to her head], because otherwise you can’t get it out either, to someone else”. A key word that keeps coming back in conversations and interviews is ‘madness’:

Cecilia Björk: What do you put into that word?

Teacher 1: Madness? It is something that is out of reach when you first think about it. Like when we first thought of going to Australia. Or when we built this house, my husband and I. It is an extremely good and worthy sort of madness.¹²⁵ But I was raised not to [make plans like that]. Nah, don’t do that. It’s too much trouble. It’s too much work. It’s too far away. [laughs].

CB: And you have done quite the opposite.

Teacher 1: Yes, maybe. But that has been my way of surviving. If I had followed that advice, I don’t know where I would be today. I’m another kind of person, perhaps. I’m curious. Want to find out. Madness is about curiosity. It involves fantasy and creativity, widening horizons, trying things. It’s having a challenge and an aim. Without it, nothing works.

Concluding analysis

Together with the group whose work has been analysed, Teacher 1 is committed to internal goods from two different practices: tunes and dances from a particular

¹²⁵ In Swedish: *en oerhört fin galenskap*.

folk tradition, and the common practice of classical violin playing. Her aspiration is to combine the best of those two worlds, making sure her students have a solid technical basis for their violin playing but giving priority to the most important internal goods of the traditional repertoire which include a strong sense of musical and physical liveliness, complex rhythm, and the exhilaration of playing those animated, humorous and feelingful tunes together. Within her teacher practice, these goods join more general aspirations for human living: joy, inspiration, vitality, humour, competence, resilience, curiosity, and a sense of belonging to a historical and social community. In a follow-up interview, she explicitly refers to two aspirations for her students: “learning to make music” and “flourishing”. What is needed in order to accomplish these aims, according to Teacher 1, expands far beyond what might be expected of an “ordinary” music school teacher.

In MacIntyre’s terms, understandings of the goods and ends of the practice are extended both by the teacher and by her students, giving rise to new possibilities. The teacher and her students belong to new generations of female musicians, breaking gender stereotypes and challenging dress codes associated with a bygone era. Aspiring towards technical excellence has been a way of handling critique against the sound of traditional fiddle playing, and of being impressive enough to ward off negative comments from the students’ schoolmates: “Most of them changed their attitude when they heard us play, and these days, the response is mainly positive”. Wearing “cool” clothes has made it possible to feel physically and psychologically comfortable while playing, and also to ‘talk back’ to covert or open contempt from peers. Similarly, the group has challenged the institutional frames for teaching and learning, travelling the world and allowing response from an appreciative international audience to influence the students’ conceptions of their own music-making and its value. Some of the concert organisers have been societies who gather descendants of Finns who settled in North America and Canada during the important wave of emigration between the 1860s and the 1930s. Playing historical music from their own region, touring in the trails of Finnish emigrants, and making thoughtful compromises between the styles and attributes of traditional and contemporary musical performances, the teacher and her students seem to have opened a wide historical, geographical and cultural perspective on their world. Planning a trip which will allow them to see the glaciers in Alaska also opens wide perspectives on the present and the future, extending the sense of liveliness to a feeling of being a living, music-making human being at a particular historical moment in time. Here, the idea of an intergenerational conversation as described (in somewhat different ways) by Oakeshott, MacIntyre or Pinar takes on a very literal character.

In chapter 2, I presented a heuristic set of categories of ways in which it has been thought that music can contribute to the good in a child’s or young person’s life. Elements from all categories seem to be present in what is important for Teacher 1: providing access to musical experience, expression, appreciation and

participation; enhancing joy and promoting a well-lived life; attending to individual development as well as to interrelationships between individual and community; and focusing on central and/or existential issues in human life. Although Teacher 1 does not use the term *Bildung*, there is something related to the idea in her stories about how students understand both themselves and others better after travelling. In particular, I argue that some of the aspirations of her practice exemplify theorisation by Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) on musicality as a way of “communicating the vitality and interests of life” (p. 1; see also Panksepp & Trevarthen, 2009).

Beyond these preconceived categories, what is strongly present is the sense of “a mad vision”: commitment to what the teacher refers to as *inspiration*, the energy which takes herself and her students to new frontiers. Listening to the stories from her practice, terms from educational theory such as ‘motivation’, ‘methods’ and ‘learning environments’, seem pale and inadequate as descriptors of what is aspired for and how it is accomplished. From a researcher’s point of view, using the successful work of Teacher 1 as a case study about generalisable good or ‘best’ practice is also dubious. On the basis of the inquiry, one might then suggest that in case of a sudden loss of inspiration, it is advisable to plan a trip to see the melting glaciers in Alaska. Given the current global environmental concerns, that may in fact very well be true. Still, there is something else to understand about what the teacher values and what she does to achieve her aspirations.

The teacher has, indeed, created conditions in which good relationships to music can be born, but these conditions cannot be understood separately from her own background, the musical goods of the practices with which she is familiar, and the relationship with her students which in several cases goes back to their early childhood. The goods of musical practices are continuously balanced against the goods both of the group and the individuals in the group, especially in situations where the teacher makes conscious choices of how much to ask of the students. To the teacher, there are really no alternatives to this strategy: first, the goods of the musical practices can only be grasped through participation in the group; and second, although the teacher aspires towards high, even professional levels of skill and working discipline (see 2.3), each student’s life as a whole always needs to be taken into account, “life gets us all, you can’t do anything about that”. Similarly to the suggestions by Kurkela (see 2.5 and 2.6), when the teacher feels frustrated, she consciously refrains from becoming coercive: “If you push them too hard, they might stop altogether”. Instead, she hopes that the students will become freely “attracted” to the music-making itself; that their subjective experiences of joy and meaning will speak for themselves. Understood as nonverbal, vivacious sharing of music and life, the musical and educational practices Teacher 1 represents might be described in the terms she herself uses about the best moments of playing: “several people doing the same [meaningful] thing, looking at each other and laughing”. Seen from the larger historical perspective which unfolds as Teacher 1 tells the stories of the music and the

musicians who matter to her, it is as if there was a symbolic connection between several generations of present and absent fiddlers who are looking at each other across the centuries, smiling, and enjoying the sound, rhythm and drive of their music: this is it, this is what life is all about.

5.2 Teacher 2

And then I knew. This is my philosophy of life. To find a free voice, a voice without tensions.

Teacher 2 came to her career from a background which included studies both in music and in marketing. She describes classical singing as her profession while jazz and popular styles are her “hobbies” which she keeps developing through courses, master classes, and contacts with jazz and pop musicians who value mutual learning. Combining several interests and staying open to new experiences is characteristic of her way of being, she says. Although singing has been a constant in her life, she has also taken time from her teaching to do other things: directing a music school for some years, administrating an organisation which promotes dance in her region, and at one point, taking a longer break to work as a teacher for refugees “which was one of the best things I have ever done”.

Her first singing teacher conveyed an unfaltering belief in her ability from the very first lesson: “From the moment I entered the classroom, she said: ‘You will be a singer’. And that was rock-solid”. But the strongest formative experiences came during master classes with an American teacher who was well-known for successfully preparing singers for Broadway careers through a combination of classical and musical-style techniques.

I was sure I knew exactly how to [sing]. And then he tells me, “Yes, you have a very nice voice, but after two years I don’t think you will be singing any longer.” “Why?” “Because you are pushing your voice and your voice is trembling.” The whole thing is on video tape and I could see afterwards how terrible and arrogant I was towards him. I was like, “I know! I know what the problem is!” And he said, “Yes. I think you know, but [at the same time] you don’t know. This is your problem. Do something about it.”

It took some time for Teacher 2 to accept that there was truth in what she had been told and that she needed to change her singing technique. Others had been commenting on it before:

The intendant of a symphony orchestra that I was performing with said, “Why are you pushing like that? Your voice is perfectly audible anyway.” But I didn’t get it, not until I watched the video from the master class again. And then I realised what they had meant. So I took lessons with [another teacher]. And then, the next summer, I went back to the master class and he said, “Very nice. You have done a very good job.”

Teacher 2 describes this as a decisive moment which changed both her own singing and her way of working with students. The most important insight was

that all singing genres seemed to need the same “healthy base” which involved correct breathing and technical skills that protect the voice from damage.

And then I knew. Oh. This...this is my philosophy of life. To find a free voice, a voice without tensions. And I am still able to...I will be 50 years old soon, and I can still do *The Queen of the Night*.¹²⁶ But it's not just that. It's about being able to try other genres as well.

For Teacher 2, it is important to understand how singing teachers can help their students master technical and stylistic requirements from several different time periods and genres. She thinks that students and teachers should have the opportunity to experiment with different styles and find the styles or combinations that are most compatible with their voices and personalities. On the one hand, the basics of singing technique and breathing control remain the same across genres. On the other hand, she points out, mistakes can still easily be made if teachers lack solid knowledge about the anatomy of the singing voice and the demands of each style. This may be the reason that some music school teachers hesitate to engage in crossover singing and prefer to recruit students to lessons in either classical or contemporary styles from the beginning. But premature categorisation is not a good solution, according to Teacher 2. For example,

many ‘classical students’ have voices that are suitable for different possibilities, and by that I mean students who have healthy voices, a large vocal range, a good sense of rhythm and a true personal interest in trying out many different musical styles. It needs to start from the student, not from the teacher.

Teacher 2 participates in regular in-service training in order to keep up to date with new styles. She finds professional development in this area enjoyable, exciting and personally meaningful, but remarks that there are also other reasons for continuing to learn:

We have to offer singing tuition which is as versatile and expedient as possible, otherwise we will lose our ‘customers’, so to speak. Like any company, we have to offer the services our customers want. All of a sudden, a new singing school may open where you can study all sorts of genres...so we really need to keep up. I am thinking of spending one year in the US or in England to get a degree in pop and jazz. In the US, they are 60 years ahead of us.

Being able to teach both classical and popular genres at least to some degree is becoming increasingly common among singing teachers, according to Teacher 2, but not many have the training that would allow them to be completely “double”. In her own music school, she has become a pioneer: students who aim for versatility come to her class. Although she feels confident that there is nothing “dangerous” about “switching between styles”, she is aware that there is scepticism among music school teachers.

¹²⁶ *The Queen of the Night* is an extremely demanding soprano part in Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute* (1791).

This is not just my own issue. We need to start a real discussion about this, about where we are going and what would be the best thing to do. I am going to discuss [my participation in this research project] at a singing teacher conference in April, and ask what my colleagues are thinking.

During the first session in the group, Teacher 2 says that she does not yet have the right words to describe what she aims for. For her, there are important distinctions between her aspirations and “Complete Vocal Technique”, a method which has been developed since the beginning of the 1990s in order to categorise and teach modes of producing the vocal sounds that are characteristic of different styles and genres.¹²⁷ What Teacher 2 is after is not one single complete technique, but a common base combined with deep knowledge of several traditions.

They say that with Complete Vocal Technique, you can sing anything. But the classical singing technique that they are doing is not up to standard. It takes years to sound like an opera singer. The body can’t take all those changes in just a few weeks.

During the second session, Teacher 2 decides to make video recordings from lessons with two of her most advanced students, both of whom have mainly been singing classical music before but are now able to perform convincingly in several genres. As with Teacher 1, she finds it easier to show what she means by sharing a recording. Excerpts from lessons are viewed and discussed during the following two sessions. The presentations take on a character of publication: the teacher wishes to present evidence that her students master different styles and are able to move between them without problems. “People usually don’t even believe that it’s the same girl, that’s what I think is exciting.” Through the recordings, her students almost seem to enter the room, particularly as introduced by the teacher: “Now this is A. First, she will sing a jazz tune for you”. As the students move through different styles, their body movements and the sounds of their voices change, sometimes quite radically. Comments from the other group members and the researcher focus on the differences and the quality of vocal sounds, and on the degree of “natural” and “free” singing that each student seems to achieve:

Teacher 4: You can tell that she is secure in her classical technique. For example, the use of vibrato was much more natural in the aria. Singing in a microphone seemed to change something in her entire body. It is really obvious [from the recording] that these are distinct techniques.

Cecilia Björk: I thought it was interesting that when you switched between these techniques, you did a warm-up for the pop singing as well. A pretty intense one. And yet, she could move right on to another style afterwards.

Teacher 2: Yes.

¹²⁷ Techniques associated with popular styles dominate within the method, see Sadolin (2000).

CB: So the fear one might have that...if they really go for it, they might ruin this very sensitive [sound] that comes later...but not at all! It's more the opposite, as if something was liberated...

Teacher 2: Yes, it does [have a liberating effect].

Versatility is discussed in terms of personal benefit for the student, in terms of social goodness, and as a part of professional singing skill:

Teacher 4: You think: oh, now listen to *that* sound coming from her all of a sudden! It's such a fantastic richness. It's fantastic to have that possibility. I must say I am in favour of [this way of working]. Why take something away from [the students] that they don't even know anything about? We don't know anything about classical singing. Ok, then we'll leave it. I mean, is that fair?

Teacher 1: When I studied at the Sibelius Academy, we didn't have any of that [versatility]. This modern [repertoire], it just didn't exist at all in the 1980s. I think learning about different styles should be always be part of singing studies. There is a risk that those who sing only pop music...that it starts to dominate too much. Are they able to sing at their grandmother's funeral, something customary, something she loved, a bit more classical? Are they able to do it? I'm just wondering.

Teacher 1: My impression is that [this student]...is a musician. This will be a musician. Not some sort of stupidly narrow-minded specialist.

The most positive aspect of aiming for versatility, according to Teacher 2, is that the students have a chance to develop in different ways, experiment safely, and find the style or styles which seem to be right for them. The first step for everyone is to acquire basic vocal skills, "getting the breathing and the entire system into place". For Teacher 2, the classical tradition offers the best and most solid initial training and understanding of the "pillar of air" which supports the voice. "Then you start to play around." The raspy sound associated with singers such as Rod Stewart or the effect of "leaking air" should be produced purposefully, without hurting the voice.

Finding "what works best" and knowing how to "make the best out of the student's personality" requires joint decision-making: "The students can tell me what they are interested in and come with suggestions, and then we try things out, listen, and discuss what seems to work". Teacher 2 first characterises this process as partly "intuitive", but later describes how she listens intently and methodically, not just for stylistic accuracy but also for tensions and potentially harmful uses of the voice. While listening to a student's voice, she pays close attention to sensations in her own body.

Once, I had to tell a student that she needed to see a laryngologist before I could accept to work with her. My own voice started to hurt when I listened to her. I knew something was wrong and that she required help which I was unable to provide. It turned out that she had vocal nodules. I have had heavy metal singers book lessons with me after cracking their voices while singing without having the technique. It's frustrating, and I have become much tougher than before [about vocal health].

Teacher 4 remarks that developing trust between teacher and student seems to be crucial "when you teach things that are as personal as singing". Teacher 2 says

that while some of her students are “business-like” about their lessons, it is not unusual to develop a personal relationship where “we both cry and laugh together”. Openness, trust and humility are described partly as qualities that the student has and partly as qualities in the relation between student and teacher. Speaking a local dialect with one of the two students who is presented on the video is mentioned as a way of “feeling at home with each other”:

I always speak dialect. I really think that is great. Immediately when we met, we were saying to each other: “Why should we speak *högsvenska* [standard Finland-Swedish] when we feel that we have the same language anyway?” I think we understand each other very well. We share part of the same background.

It emerges that Teacher 2 knows this particular student and her family history very well. She cites numerous persons in the student’s family who have been musically active, going back three generations.

So she gets enormous positive feedback from home [about her classical singing]. But she says that this experience of being able to break [with singing classical music only] has been so rich for her. She sings jazz at home with her father and that has been immensely enjoyable.

Broader technical and stylistic knowledge and skills are experienced as enriching in themselves by both teacher and student. In addition, increased versatility has enabled the student to connect in several different ways with her family and community. Although there is a particularly close collaboration with the two students presented, the positive experiences have encouraged Teacher 2 to extend her aspirations and demand at least some versatility from all of her students. Most of them seem to enjoy it, she says; sometimes, she has sent a student to another teacher. The aim is not to change what the students are interested in, whether it is pop or classical music, but to challenge the habit of clinging to one style only. “It is sometimes almost like a cramp. We really need to learn to let go.”

Teacher 2 has tried to dedramatise learning by sometimes participating in master classes together with her students.

It’s great fun because I see them develop and I think it’s immensely important that they see that I can develop and take in new things, too. That we can learn together. They really enjoyed it when I went up to sing for the guest teacher, “Hey, let’s go watch her make a mess of it!” [laughs] And I don’t mind. I have learnt over the years not to take mistakes too hard. It is good that the students get to see that we are human.

Learning is necessary, Teacher 2 points out, because “you can’t teach if you don’t know what you are talking about”. In general, she worries that contests such as The X Factor and Idol might give young people the impression that it is possible “to become a good singer out of the blue, without any skills at all, which is really wrong”. Studio technicians can compensate for lack of skill as long as the new star, “the younger, the better”, has the right look and can make the right moves on stage.

Teacher 2: I am allergic to that sort of nonsense. Sure, some seem to be born with an ability to sing. But not everyone is. Singing is like a craft and skills will be lost if we don't have masters and apprentices. There is a lot of cheating, particularly with breathing. They spice up the music in order to mask the flaws. You need to be experienced to hear what they are doing.

CB: How do you notice it?

Teacher 2: Well, the quality of the voice. [The singers] get hoarse and tired really quickly. They just don't have...

CB: Do they sing out of tune?

Teacher 2: Well, that, too. Most of the time.

When she speaks of “the tradition”, Teacher 2 refers to the cumulated knowledge about the workings of the voice which she associates primarily with classical singing. “I would never renounce that myself; why should I renounce it in my teaching?” But equally important, she repeats, is stylistic awareness. She has asked jazz teachers to help her correct her own jazz sound, because “some classical singers think they can sing pop or jazz, but it sounds horrible!” While traditional technique gives healthy voice habits, pop techniques can add flexibility and improve legato¹²⁸ for classical singers. Sliding, however, is out of the question in classical singing. “I stop that immediately when students do that. You have got to stay in style.”

For some music school teachers, according to Teacher 2, the reluctance to try other styles than the ones they are most familiar with is connected with convictions about what should be considered good music. Religious belief can be one reason for hesitation. Sometimes, the music itself is considered unsuitable; at other times, it is more a matter of the contexts of performance, body movements, dress and makeup. Different teachers are committed to different values, and this can limit the possibilities of creating common projects in music schools. Teacher 2 says that some effort is required in order to protect mutual respect, good relations and collaboration among colleagues.

We need to talk about these issues, and I hope that we can find a common strategy.

We can never make everybody happy, that's for sure. [Outer consensus] would only be a sign that there is a dictator. But still, that one might dare perhaps to say: ‘Hey, isn't that just a bit old-fashioned, after all?’ [laughs]

Over the course of her career, Teacher 2 has consciously adopted a more open attitude towards different musical styles, partly as a result of her three-year long experience of working with Somali refugees. Music, she realised, was “not that simple”; it was about culture, about “many things”. This insight was significant and changed her outlook not just on music, but on life in general.

I learned everything about how they eat, how they dress, and I learned about their music. For them, rhythm is incredibly important. I had always been interested in popular culture and popular music, but I wasn't particularly good at rhythm. And

¹²⁸ *Legato* is originally an Italian word which means “tied together”. In singing or playing, it refers to connecting tones smoothly without silences between them.

then I met these people. You know, there is rhythm in everything they do, even drinking tea. The body is present all the time. I also understood that being very focused on what other people think of you will only make you miserable. I feel more proud of who I am now, and that has been important. I dare to try things that I would not have dared to do twenty years ago.

During the last session, Teacher 2 is happy to announce that the two students she presented have passed an important milestone: they have been accepted for auditions to a major musical production. For the teacher, this is one of the first clear signs that things are moving in the right direction.

I feel like I am in just at the beginning of a staircase. I have started something, but where do I go from here? It seems like people want me to do something, because I get a lot of phone calls and nudges, ‘wouldn’t it be great if you did this or that’. They seem to put quite a lot of trust in me. And what will happen after this? Are we on our way to a new era? Maybe we need to create a whole new ideal of Finnish singing.

Whatever the future brings, Teacher 2 says, it is essential that professional singing teachers stand up for what they believe is important. There is a market for singers who attract students but are not educated as teachers: “And then the students come to me and I have to start sorting out everything that has gone wrong. I would prefer to spend time on my own development”. Her hope is that the joy of singing itself will become more important than placing students in genre categories. “That is my aim. To show that singing is enjoyable. You can do some Monteverdi, and then some heavy rock, you can do both. There, Complete Vocal Technique has a point. But [you can’t do] everything all the time!”

A further aspect of being a professional singing teacher, she insists, is to be aware that unskilled instruction can cause not just physiological damage, but also psychological harm. A pianist can forget about the instrument temporarily, but a singer’s voice cannot be switched off.

You have [the voice] right inside you, right here. So if the teacher does something which is unpleasant for the student, that may cause lifelong harm. I become very upset when I hear someone saying that a teacher has been cruel and coercive with the students. I always try to turn things around, praising them and making suggestions, “What if you think like this?” I know how painful it is to hear negative things. Some teachers yell at their students, “You are lousy, can’t you even hear how terribly you sing?” I think that is violence. There’s not a chance that I would use that.

When Teacher 2 needs inspiration, she listens to recordings of singers whose voices she admires. Genre and style matter less than the health, clarity and range of the voice; she mentions historical opera singers as well as contemporary names from pop and gospel. Listening to instrumentalists and working together with them is an equally important part of learning, she says: “When it comes to pop, you don’t need an ideal, you need a musician to help you.”

A year after the collaborative project has ended, I meet Teacher 2 again for an interview. She says that she feels more confident about crossover techniques,

that her own voice has developed, and that versatility is popular with her students.

I have grown as a teacher and as a singer. I feel quite stable at the moment and I dare to do even more now, insist more, stand up for what I believe in. I know where I am going. The students seem to enjoy the lessons, I don't have any cancellations, and they are starting to get more visible gigs. It is as if I was beginning to approach my aim, to find what it is that I want to accomplish.

Several times during the interview, Teacher 2 talks about the importance of careful listening. She uses the Swedish adjective *lyhörd*, which translates as having a keen, sharp and sensitive ear. In Swedish, the word is also used in a metaphorical sense. "You have to be *lyhörd* [sensitive] to your students, which can be heavy sometimes." Listening is also important in understanding what is new in the field and deciding what new styles and techniques to take on board, and what to discard. For Teacher 2, singing is a physical craft where voices are physically modelled.

Teacher 2: We need to be careful about our guild.

CB: There is something like the pride of workmanship?

Teacher 2: The pride of workmanship! We need to be tough. Those of us who know what we are talking about.

However, in contrast to the aim of the traditional master-apprentice system, the purpose of music schools is not necessarily to train new masters. Instead, Teacher 2 emphasises music's potential to make life more joyful and worthwhile.

Our task is not to find new stars. Of course, if someone is a supertalent we should give all the necessary push and support. But also to find this...that it enriches your life, that it gives you something else. You meet a lot of people, you can make music with others, not everyone has to be a star. But you can get some joy out of it. What we need to show is that there is a possibility of having this really fine hobby...this splendid thing that you can do.

Concluding analysis

For Teacher 2, becoming a versatile singer is a gradual process which requires time, awareness, and contact with practitioners who are knowledgeable in the styles and genres that the singer wishes to master. Seen through the lens of praxialism, her version of the statement that 'many' does not mean 'just any' (Bowman, 2005b, p. 63) might be that 'many' does not mean 'as many as you like'. It also does not mean 'in any way, anytime'. Mediating between older and newer traditions without losing important goods of either takes professional skill. The acts of weighing and balancing which Teacher 2 performs always involve the question: Will the characteristics of this style be helpful or harmful for the student's vocal health, development as a musician, and ability to perform in other styles? In this way, value hierarchies are established not between genres, but between the student's different musical aims. However, protecting students' voices is seen as an essential condition for any teaching and learning in singing,

and throughout the conversations this concern emerges as an ethical commitment similar to the medical oath of nonmaleficence.

Interpreted with support from the heuristic map presented in chapter 2, the aims of Teacher 2 include a strong wish for her students to develop the singing skills that will allow them to experience, participate in, and appreciate different musical contexts. She refers to joy as a main aim and argues that for her students, versatility has enhanced this dimension of learning music and enabled the students to relate to others, for example family members, in new ways. For the teacher, being able to provide this possibility for the students requires conscious efforts to remain trustworthy and companionable in relation to colleagues who are committed to strong specialisation. The long-term aim of including an extended range of goods of singing in music school teaching is not simply a private project, but involves the entire teacher community: “We really need to talk about these issues”.

The human qualities that Teacher 2 defends in and through her practice include openness, curiosity, and commitment to continuous learning. Humility is important, but so is confidence, daring to try new things without requiring immediate perfection or seeking general approval. There is a strong emphasis on honesty which seems to be anchored in the teacher’s own life history. Since she has personal experience of receiving transformative help from a skilled teacher, she has stayed faithful to this experience, refusing any “nonsense” about a “no skills required” approach to specific genres of singing. In contact with persons who represent musical and cultural traditions other than those she has been most familiar with, Teacher 2 has strived for the same kind of honesty, freely acknowledging that she has had much to learn about technique from Broadway-style singing, and about rhythm from Somali culture.

Creating the conditions that promote good relationships to music, as the idea emerges through her stories of teaching and learning, requires a combination of openness towards the new and stability from trusted knowledge. The aim might be formulated as *sustainability*; for instance, in terms of long-term vocal health or the future of music schools which need to “move with the times” if they are to survive as institutions. Building a great deal of trust between student and teacher is important for creating the right conditions, making sure that the students feel psychologically safe, encouraged and cared about. The commitment to versatility is strongly reminiscent of Kurkela’s view that students should benefit from “freedom in a rich environment” where they are presented with “impulses, alternatives and possibilities” which enable them to experience that “there is this way [of making music] too; and there is this kind [of music] as well” (K. Kurkela, personal communication, November 14, 2012).

In searching for what is right for the student, Teacher 2 engages in outer conversation with her students, but not just about genres and repertoires. She also talks about “what seems to function”, asks the students to report on how they experience sound and physical sensation, and pays close attention to what

her own body ‘tells’ her about different vocal sounds. Her inner conversation involves remembered advice from her own teacher (“I carry his handbook with me”), a stored memory bank of “healthy” vocal sounds used as benchmarks, and careful balancing between embodied skill and new impulses.

Repeatedly during conversation, Teacher 2 comes back to the physicality of her work. She explains that she comes from a family of craftsmen and that she experiences the moulding of voices as a physical craft which involves different forms of touching and bending, working with the student’s neck, and easing the voice into the right shape for a particular sound. Here, as in MacIntyre’s texts on practices, the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *poiësis* becomes blurred (see above, p. 7). As Teacher 2 remarks, musical practices are not preserved as abstract ideals; they exist in human beings who know how to get things right.

To Teacher 2, ‘good’ in relation to music means ‘joyful’, ‘skilful’, ‘knowledgeable’, ‘social’, ‘free from tensions’, and ‘physically healthy’. In her own family, music has become “a lifestyle” which is so natural that “we sometimes forget what a fine thing it is that we are doing”. Versatility, in her opinion, is an important part of music’s power to contribute to the good life. Understood in this way, the overriding concern of her practice is to extend and diversify the students’ possibilities to enrich their life through music, and to improve her own capacities for helping them to do so.

5.3 Teacher 3

The issue is what to do with the boys. What we need to do so that they come to the next lesson. So that they will start to practise a little or at least take the instrument in their hands. So that their souls will be on fire about music.

Teacher 3 is a violinist and violist with long experience in different orchestras and bands. Already as a teenager, he played in a chamber orchestra which gave frequent concerts and participated successfully in international competitions. In addition, he took up the guitar, drums, bass and banjo. Playing regular gigs has been a constant in his life since he was young: with the chamber orchestra, a big band, jazz groups, theatre orchestras, and a rock band. For several summers, he toured with a group that played dance music: “That was tough. Going to bed at eight in the morning, then up at three p.m., packing all the stuff again. You know what it’s like”. Around the age of 14, he got a new violin teacher who was very ambitious about repertoire and “maybe a little too interested [in his students’ progress]. So, at 16, I was playing Paganini caprices¹²⁹ with bad technique, too difficult stuff, and too much, perhaps”. Many hours of struggling ended in injury and a crisis when he could not use his left arm and hand “even to pick up a paper”. Then, there was a period which Teacher 3 describes as “learning to play

¹²⁹ Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) was the most famous violin virtuoso of his time. His 24 *Caprices* are études (studies) which focus on specific and sometimes extreme technical skills.

all over again”, a turning point which started a sustained interest in reflection on teaching and learning the violin. “I thought of becoming a musician in an orchestra, but ended up deciding that it would be nicer to be a teacher.” After completing education as a violinist and violin teacher, he has studied for several other postgraduate degrees and considers continuing professional development a prerequisite for his work as a teacher. He also cites this commitment as a reason for enrolling in the project.

I think lifelong learning is quite important because...I know people who have the same paper [diploma, credentials] for ten years, and they feel that it’s complete. ‘Ok, next [student]’. And if it’s like that for forty years, working in the same way, [as if] with the same students, after that, they are pretty much dead. So it’s about getting to know yourself, and learning how to know your students, how they think...and to learn more.

His teaching career has included one year as a music teacher in a school, many years of teaching the violin and the alto privately and in music schools, developing music education for groups of children with disabilities, and conducting student ensembles as well as semiprofessional and professional orchestras in Finland and abroad. Learning in orchestras and bands has been very important for his own development, and he enjoys teaching in group settings.

Teaching students in groups entails a larger responsibility. You spend time together with children and try to make them learn something. In fact, the first thing they have to learn is to actually come to the lesson, and then to be quiet [laughs]. And then [as a teacher] you need to know a thing or two about pedagogy [laughs].

During the past few years, Teacher 3 has been particularly engaged in running violin groups for boys. He decides to make this activity the focus of his inquiry in the project. In Finnish music schools, male and female students are generally taught together. Between the second and the third group session, I arrange an interview with Teacher 3 and the director of his music school (MD) in order to form a fuller understanding of the background to the decision to try this unusual solution. What emerges is the story of a number of young, male music school students who were possibly about to stop playing when the director intervened.

MD: I knew one of them and his friends quite well and followed what was happening closely. They went to the same school, some of them were classmates, and they had taken violin lessons with the same teacher. Then, she moved abroad, and some of her other students moved, too. The remaining boys were about 12 or 13 at the time, and of course you thought...you knew that the tough years were ahead of them, and we were thinking about how we might succeed in bridging those crises. All the ingredients were present for them to stop completely, unless we could find a way of sustaining their motivation and keep them in the music school. They played other stuff too, on the side. And they got on really well together.

The director turned to Teacher 3 for help. Together, they decided that in addition to individual lessons, the boys would be taught and “cared for” as a group.

Teacher 3: So the first thing I had to do was get to know them. It was a new world for me. My own children were much younger. I needed to think about what these boys' world was like.

The aim was not to make it “his” group, Teacher 3 explains, but to assist the students in forming a group of their own. It took more than a year before he felt assured that the plan was about to succeed.

Teacher 3: Yes, it was at least a year or a year and a half before it worked. They got to know each other better and learned from each other what the whole thing was going to be about. And then there was the physical job, learning to listen to each other. Not performing a series of compulsive movements which produce sound, but actually doing something together.

Cecilia Björk: [laughs] And when you say that “it worked”, what do you mean?

Teacher 3: What I mean is that I can sit on a chair and listen and just notice that things work. They started to take responsibility. It was their group. I was just a guy who was there to annoy them [laughs].

MD: I think you really hit the nail on the head there, when you said it was *their* group. That is what kept them together for such a long time. Another significant thing is that students who are becoming teenagers experience themselves a bit more as adults. You can't boss them around in a humiliating way. If they feel that the teacher actually listens to what they say, I think it syncs better and you build up much more trust.

According to the music school director, part of the success was also due to careful choice and presentation of repertoire.

MD: Finding the repertoire that works best for the student is incredibly important. It's not about genre or about finding what works once and for all, but to find the feeling in the music. And you have got to understand the stage in the student's development. During every concert, you can see when students has made the music their own, and when they haven't.

Teacher 3 agrees, but adds that maturation processes also play a part, and that students “find their own relation to music”. According to him, this is something students do by themselves, while the teacher walks next to them, following them on their way.

CB: Still, I would be interested in how you present a new tune.

Teacher 3: [demonstrating, in a calm voice] Ok, let's play that one. [laughs] And if it works, then it does. If it doesn't, we'll try another one.

CB: So you give music for them to try out, to see what they think?

Teacher 3: Yes, and to see if it's possible. If it suits them or not. And if it's too difficult, we can try again later. And if we try two or three tunes and none of them seem to work, the world is still full of music.

Gradually, the repertoire that “works” has come to include a wide variety of genres with a particular emphasis on folk music from Finland, Ireland and Central Europe. Regular gigs have been important for the students. During one particularly significant tour to the Czech Republic, they gave a concert in the town where their former teacher lived, reconnecting with her and playing both

Czech and Finnish folk music. Since then, the students have graduated. At the time of the project, the group carries on a loose existence of its own. Its members are also musically active in other contexts and keep in contact with Teacher 3, sometimes to inform him about upcoming gigs.

The positive experience described above has inspired the teacher to try similar solutions with other students. Regular individual tuition is retained, but in addition, the teacher tries to find students who “match” each other sufficiently to form groups that learn together. Not all groups have been successful, and some students clearly prefer individual lessons. At the time of the project, two groups of “violin brothers” are active. During discussions in the project group, Teacher 3 emphasises the need for young male violin players to have “a safe haven”, a place where they can have “something of their own” and find “their own thing” in music. Especially between the ages of 7 and 9, the teacher points out, boys can seem quite young in comparison to girls of the same age and feel obliged to act more serious, tough and competitive if there are girls around.

They are still Mum’s little boys. And in the group, it’s really important to allow them to be as small and silly as they are. As we are. And then they need a role model, an authority. That person can be me, or an older student who also plays in a rock band. At that age, they are not that interested in the Sibelius competition. But an older boy who plays the violin, that’s something!

Importantly, all the students in the groups attend the same primary school and their violin classes are arranged in the school building.

That’s quite nice, because they are used to going to school with their violin cases. So if someone tries to bully them about it, they have support from each other and from the older boys. They can say: We know [the older boy in a rock band], he has been visiting our group. And they can say: Our group is going to Powerpark [a well-known adventure park].

The need for protection is connected with expectations on boys to be masculine and sporty, and with stereotypical images of violin playing as an unmasculine activity. Throughout the conversations about his practice, the comments contributed by Teacher 3 are often tinted with humour. The same playfulness seems to be part of how he performs some of the acts that protect his students from bullying or premature demands on stereotypical gender identification, maturity, or ability to defend themselves.

I tell the students that we will play football. And some violin, of course. Then, maybe during the last lesson, we play football. But that’s what everyone remembers. Football! That is the most important thing.

Similar images of a world between play and reality emerge as the teacher describes the informal atmosphere which he attempts to create during lessons:

If I had a dog, I would bring my dog. But I bring my small children. My son is three years old and he runs around there, especially if it’s a concert. You have got to be able to join their world somehow. You need to be above it too, of course. Be the

leader. Or look at them, and laugh. We can play together, not just play the violin and be demanding.¹³⁰

There is a conscious decision to prioritise learning in a safe and constructive environment, focusing on “auditive and kinesthetic activity” and increasingly playing the violin as much as possible. Consequently, the teacher takes a relaxed attitude to other aims such as neatness and orderliness.

We do things, that is the first concern. Everybody has to have an instrument, otherwise they can't be in the group. If the instrument breaks, I am happy, because it means that someone tried to do something with it. If it is as new after two years, it means...Same thing with the notebook. After one year, it needs to look like this [creases and tears a paper].

In a similar vein, the teacher tells the story about a student who recently arrived to his individual lesson more well-prepared than usually, but without his sheet music: “[I said, and I was right:] Let me guess. You left it on the note stand at home”. Instead of reprimanding the student for being forgetful, the teacher understands the meaning of what is happening in the larger perspective of the student's development. Choosing a focus and level of aspiration which is appropriate for each student is central in order to sustain learning, and the teacher again uses humour to defuse what might be felt as normative demands on musical sounds and activities, as illustrated in a conversation with another participant:

Teacher 1: Tell us about what [music] you play, and how you play.

Teacher 3: Well, we play quite badly. I don't have that big ambitions.

Teacher 1: Do you sing?

Teacher 3: No, [with the youngest boys], we haven't been doing that yet, because...I think first I need to say 'no singing allowed here'. Then we can think about singing.

Getting results in the form of pieces that sound good in concert would certainly be possible “if you played only one tune for an entire year”. To Teacher 3, that is not acceptable. In a later interview, he uses the expression “broiler education”, referring to a process where natural maturation is sacrificed for the sake of producing quick and visible results, often with devastating consequences.

I don't believe in that. What I believe in is that we explore together what we are like as human beings, and what kind of music we are going to play, and what the purpose of the group is. It takes a little more time. For about six months we get no results at all and nobody will want to listen. We don't do gigs, that is a big step. Playing is what is important at the moment.

In the beginning, Teacher 3 insists, his work is about helping the young students to form a group in which they enjoy spending their time. Together, they need to establish rules, learn to listen to each other, and create a supportive and predictable space. The group becomes a place where the boys increase their self-understanding and their understanding of others, and accumulate experience of

¹³⁰ In Swedish: *Vi kan leka tillsammans, inte bara spela och kräva.*

how different kinds of interaction can have different consequences. Small conflicts arise regularly and need to be sorted out, preferably by the students themselves, but with help from the teacher as needed: “I am like a referee”. For example, arriving late means paying a small fine which is kept in a cashbox and used for ice cream in spring.

The day after we created that rule I was late, so I also had to pay. That was less fun. But before the rule, it was unpleasant to start [the group lessons]. If I just say things and nothing happens, all is lost. They will stop coming to the group.

Bullying and teasing are absolutely forbidden. When someone in the group is not yet able to play a piece, the others are expected to offer help and support. Internal comparison among the students themselves is allowed and even encouraged, but dedramatised in a matter-of-fact style:

I don't think you need to be afraid of that. Children are honest, and it's important to be honest. When they are two years old, they claim that they can do anything. But when they are three or four, they are very aware. So I get them to do self-evaluations and votes, and they are unanimous about who in the group plays best, second best, and so on. They know.

The fact that students differ in skill and experience does not mean that they cannot participate. “If someone makes a mistake and loses the tune [while we are playing], I say: [keep going], just play an open A string, but real loud so we can hear you!” This way of working is partly inspired by Finnish folk musician and teacher Mauno Järvelä, who is well-known for his aspiration to create intergenerational, participatory communities of string players.¹³¹ Many of the tunes that the group plays are Järvelä's arrangements which are written for this purpose: parts range from very easy to demanding and can be easily changed according to the needs of the group. In order for students to remember the tunes, Teacher 3 uses movement and clapping rhythms. He also invents nonsense lyrics related to the students' age and everyday interests.

Teacher 1: Are you teaching them by the ear, or have you taught them to read music?

Teacher 3: Well, we have been looking at those ball shapes [notes] a bit. It depends on the person. Some of them write down numbers, and others will look at the ball shapes, and someone learns from me, by ear. But during gigs we don't use sheet music.

A safe learning environment is a prerequisite for self-expression, “sensing oneself”, and developing as a person, according to Teacher 3. At the moment, the boys in one group enjoy role playing games where they have to invent alter egos for themselves.

I think that is important. It allows them to be and to show something [about themselves] that they wouldn't show otherwise. It is there, but they are not able to say it, only to do it. They can say it through joking.

¹³¹ See Hill (2012).

The group needs to be a place where the students can try out new things and experiment with their learning without being afraid of making mistakes. Teacher 3 would be suspicious of a class where “the children are quiet and do exactly as they are told, and everything’s going very well, and [all the teacher says is] ‘see you next time’ [laughs]”. For him, it is important that students are alert, awake and lively: “They have to be present, anything else is a waste of time. Then we may as well take a break”. Sometimes, ‘alertness’ is achieved by trying to play something which is actually much too difficult. There is a particular kind of enjoyment about the struggle itself and coming out of it proud and a bit sore. Humour is also a good way of keeping up the right state of mind, described by Teacher 3 with the Finnish word *terävä*, which translates as ‘sharp’, including English synonyms and metaphorical meanings.¹³²

A further reason for creating a safe environment where students feel that they are among friends is that learning to play an instrument will take several years which include “sensitive periods” in a young person’s life. One such period, Teacher 3 points out, is around the age of nine, when many boys are less skilful and mature than their female peers. Although he does not think that male and female students should be taught separately as a rule, he believes that struggling with the gender gap and trying to compete can sometimes take too much energy from learning. At a certain age, he says, girls are so much stronger that the boys might feel completely steamrollered and give up playing. That is when gender division may provide a temporary solution.

But it’s not good to do only that. It’s good that they have a chance to have their own thing, even their own repertoire, but when they are a bit older, it’s important that they are all together. [Students] need to become able to manage with all kinds of people.

Another sensitive period occurs in adolescence. Patience and humour are important keys to sustaining lessons and playing during this time:

Teacher 3: I wait. And I joke a little with them. And that makes it easier for them, too. They can say to me: “Life is heavy at the moment. I am having a hard time.”

CB: They know that you know?

Teacher 3: Yes.

Learning to play an instrument, as any learning, involves times of frustration. “It seems to be built in. I wonder why it is like that, but it seems very natural.” When those moments of hard work coincide with rough periods in the young person’s life, the teacher needs to provide reassurance and empathy.

For small children, everything is easy, and you can build technique quite fast. But around the age of nine or ten, the difficulties start. When they notice that by themselves, you can confirm. At that point, it’s good to say it out loud. “This doesn’t come easy. If it was easy, anyone could play.”

¹³² For example, the following translations for *terävä* can be found in Finnish-English dictionaries: sharp, clever, bright, acute, smart, quick-witted, pointed, cutting, acerbic, astute, aculeate, perceptive, incisive, ingenious, keen, witty.

Similarly, the music school director says that he has aspired to cultivate the patience and encouraging attitude that would have been helpful for him during his own teenage years.

CB: You said that you wanted to become the teacher you didn't have. Would that have been an open person, someone who...

MD: Yes. Someone who would have been able to see me when I was fourteen and fifteen, and would have seen that I had huge motivation, but there were lots of things I was not able to do, and didn't know how to do. And that is, I guess, the philosophy of [Teacher 3].

Teacher 3: You need to have perspective. One day, they will come to the lesson and they go, "I had a quick look at that tune last night", and [they are able to play it], and you are like "Aha! Oh! Well." [laughs]

Repeatedly during conversation in the project group and during the interview together with the music school director, there are attempts to define how male and female students might be different and need different approaches to teaching and learning. An opinion shared by several of the teachers seems to be that girls tend to more perfectionist and invest more of their personal prestige in the musical sounds they produce, whereas boys worry less about their performance. Although Teacher 3 agrees and adds that in his experience, girls seem to need more praise and encouragement, he is hesitant about clear-cut categorisation. Other factors than gender need to be taken into account in decisions about teaching and learning, he insists: age, personality, background, group dynamics. The Finnish music school system seems better suited for students who prefer individual lessons, he says, and "boys enjoy being in groups". But again, this is a generalisation. Getting to know the boys as individuals is central, trying to understand their world, their mix of superhero fantasies, playfulness and sensitivity. The students help the teacher to understand how he can best teach them. "It really is a privilege to learn from them."

Since Teacher 3 believes in the importance of male role models and learning through participation in safe, intergenerational settings, he has expanded the 'men only' groups to include family members. Little brothers join in regularly and fathers and uncles are invited to participate in rehearsals and gigs, playing double bass or the guitar. Whenever someone in the family has music as a hobby, that is a real resource, according to Teacher 3: "I always tell the parents: come on, play music together with the boy. Five years from now, it won't be possible anymore. And pretty often, that turns out to be the case". During one session, Teacher 3 brings a video from a rehearsal in which family members take part. The boys and men stand in a circle where everyone can have eye contact, see the teacher, and most importantly "have contact, so that you breathe together, at the same time".

Teacher 1: I think it's good that the parents are there. It's a whole different feeling. And you get to play with people of different ages, across those boundaries again. They give support, and they are present, and that feels safe.

Teacher 3: That's right.

Teacher 1: And they are having fun together. You can see that they are having fun.

Teacher 2: You can see it. It's really great fun. And the boys are concentrating, because for once they know more than their fathers! You can really see how they are making the most of that. 'I am totally able to do this!' I believe that this works, this idea about mixing ages.

The teacher's own role models include a few 'grand old teachers' who have had the same concern and care for male students and have been successful in helping them sustain their interest in music. Unfortunately, these teachers have not written or published texts about their professional experience. During the project, Teacher 3 travels to one of them to discuss the particular challenges of working with young boys who play the violin. One of the other participants remembers the older teacher from one of his visits to her music school:

Teacher 5: I was very impressed by his enormous sense of dignity. He was rather soft-spoken, not like 'here I am, the great authority', but there was an inner authority about him, and humility in relation to the student.

CB: That fits with what [Teacher 3] just said about respecting the individual.

Teacher 3: He held the post of leading professor and could have chosen only to work with the most advanced students. But he told me that he also wanted to teach the ones who didn't seem destined to succeed. To him, that is the real work: "That's how you learn how to inspire each and every one of them, and you see what [in your teaching] works and what does not".

CB: It's as you said, all students are different.

Teacher 3: Yes, and they all have their...you never know. I have had students who...we tried to play, and I saw them going up closer and closer to the note stand. "Ok, next week you are wearing glasses! You are going to the doctor." "But I don't want to wear glasses!" And other stuff like that. All sorts of things.

When I meet Teacher 3 again about a year after the project has ended, he is working on a master's thesis on orchestral conducting. "It will be a small handbook for any crazy person who wants to start doing that. It's about experiences, about the realities of what you need to do." One reason for engaging in research is his commitment to lifelong learning: "A day when I don't learn anything is a boring day. The world is full of interesting things if you keep your eyes and ears open and try to learn". Another reason is that an increasing number of music school graduates are interested in joining amateur orchestras in which they can continue to play. Some of these graduates visit the student groups that Teacher 3 runs, and some advanced students can get a chance to join the orchestras; again, this seems like a further extension of how Teacher 3 encourages intergenerational learning in groups of mixed ability.

During the particular winter week when we meet, the youngest group of violin students is planning to spend their session ice swimming at the suggestion of the students themselves.¹³³ "But if someone ends up not daring to jump in, no teasing is allowed. It's just the same as for the violin playing." Fears, new

¹³³ See footnote 121, p. 112.

challenges and new insights are approached gradually, always with support from the group.

We don't just learn new things [on the violin], we have other things, too. What we [engage in] is: what is important? Other things too, going to an adventure park, playing a gig. The perspective is that when [the students] turn fifteen, they should still enjoy being together. That [these years] can be a good time for them. Of course, it's important that they learn. We have 900 years of music history to cover. But I think that comes along the way. In any case, it all starts with music, with playing different things.

At the moment of the interview, the youngest group seems to be developing in a positive direction. But Teacher 3 remarks that the real evaluation of how well the group has worked is still several years away. Having a long-term perspective on music and life emerges as the bedrock of his teacher practice, both for himself and as part of what he hopes the students will learn.

[Like Teacher 1 said], it is important to have crazy ideas that can only be realised after three or four years. It teaches the children and young people that you need to have perspective. That you will also have your life three years from now. For young people, that is quite difficult. It's about today, tomorrow, and next Monday. But after that...

For Teacher 3, part of having perspective is to choose a purpose for teaching and learning which is attainable, meaningful, and has human dimensions.

It's not about being a world champion, or only about being the best violin player. What is more important is to have sufficient skills to be able to enjoy music in some way. To play in a group, or with a pianist. Together.

Concluding analysis

The idea to create groups in which young male students can learn the violin weaves together two aspirations in the practice of Teacher 3: to initiate his students in the practice of violin playing and to support them in living a good life while they are learning. Importantly, since learning takes place over the course of several years, many changes occur during this time. The good life of a seven-year-old violin player is not likely to be the same as the good life of a fifteen-year-old, and the teacher needs an ability to change focus. Continuing development in the practice of Teacher 3 is founded in personal experience of being a male violinist who has always preferred to learn in groups, and who takes a particular interest in children's musical and emotional development. His quest as a teacher involves efforts to form an ever deepening understanding about what it is, and what it is like, to be a growing boy who is learning to play the violin.

The observation that boys have a harder time as music school students seems to have some support in statistical reports from the Association of Finnish Music Schools: 36% of the students are male (SML website) and they are slightly more likely to drop out than their female peers (Heino & Ojala, 2006). Developing practices of teaching and learning that increase boys' participation in basic

education in the arts more generally is an official, nation-wide aim (Tiainen, 2012). In folk music, as noted by Teacher 1, violin playing used to be a male occupation. Today, she says, “all there is for boys is ice hockey and football”. According to Teacher 3, his young male music school students run the risk of being bullied at school for carrying a violin case or for playing the violin together with girls.¹³⁴ Both of these issues need to be addressed, and he treats them separately. First, he initiates all-male groups protected by playful confusion around a combination of violin playing and stereotypically ‘male’ activities. Then, as the students’ confidence grows, he makes sure that they also play in mixed gender groups. As a temporary solution, the closed group, “something of their own”, gives the boys time to be relieved of gendered border work (Kuoppamäki, 2015) and to express and experiment with their developing personalities, including aspects that are not part of the social masculinity norm. The students need ‘countervoices’ and counterarguments in order to defend themselves against external pressure, and they are supported in finding the means for doing so. The teacher’s task is to help his students “explore together” what they are like as persons, what music they enjoy playing, and “what the purpose of the group is”. This approach bears strong resemblance with the way Frith (1996a) describes social music making: rather than simply confirming preexisting beliefs, individuals and groups “get to know themselves” as they engage in cultural activity (p. 111).

Purposeful encouragement of intergenerational presence and support creates role models and enables reassurance in the practice of Teacher 3. During the learning process, no musical ambition is allowed to force the students to make unreasonable compromises with regard to their life as a whole, such as sacrificing friendship, self-image, or self-esteem. Being in what-is-not-yet-ready, both in terms of personal and musical maturity, requires a safe environment which the teacher creates in collaboration with students and parents. The group constitutes an aim in itself, offering opportunities to play together and to cumulate musical experiences, but it also provides the “conditions in which a good relationship to music can be born”. Therefore, showing care for the atmosphere and the friendships in the group is a central part of the teacher’s work. If the conditions are lost, all may be lost. Human relationships are important to music-making: teachers, parents and trusted peers matter more than a bureaucratic institution bent on effectiveness might take into account. For example, it affected a group of male adolescent students that several of their friends and their teacher of many years moved away at the same time; it was important that they were able to form attachments to a new teacher who cared about them, and travelling to see the teacher who had moved was also significant.

¹³⁴ See e.g. Abeles (2009) on musical instrument gender associations and Taylor (2011) on music education and bullying.

Potentially critical periods in students' lives and development as violinists need to be predicted and taken into account, according to both Teacher 3 and the director. The teacher treats difficulties with patience and humour. Focusing on sustaining good conditions for learning music as the students' lives evolve has the consequence of allowing him to notice when something needs attention, as in the case of the student whose eyesight had changed. In addition to the musical qualities that are practiced in the group, a set of long-established human virtues are cultivated: honesty, justice, fairness, loyalty, perseverance. The teacher supports his students and also expects them to be encouraging and caring towards each other. Again, playfulness and humour are always present to balance the struggle of learning. As recommended by Kurkela (1993), learning to play the violin is real, but not "too real" (see above, pp. 69–70).

With regard to the heuristic map developed in 2.3, all categories of how music education has been thought to contribute to the good in a child's or young person's life are present: access to musical experience, expression and participation; enhancing joy and promoting a well-lived life; attending to individual development as well as to interrelationships between individual, peers, and community; and focusing on central and/or existential issues in human life. For Teacher 3, what is going on in the violin groups needs to be in tune with what the students are like as persons and point to what is important in a large perspective. In particular, and similarly to what is emphasised by Teacher 1, there is a strong concern for feeling genuinely alive. The aspiration is expressed as an aim for the students in the group to be "sharp" and "alert". But it is equally important in the teacher's own life: teaching in the same way for forty years is a sure road to feeling "pretty much dead".

Early in the group discussions, Teacher 3 is asked for advice by other participants on "how to teach boys". His response is that although there may be general things to take into account, unpredictability and improvisation are inevitable and positive parts of the process.

Each time, those [group] lessons are *a newborn thing*. So I can't say. Of course some general principles exist, but every time there are surprises that I cannot think up in advance.

The stories from the practice of Teacher 3 illustrate some of the ideas which he builds on, but they also show that what has worked for him and his students is far removed from the routine of a standardised, weekly individual lesson. For him, goodness is related to a fine-tuned balance between stability and change, play and reality, small steps and lifelong aims. Along the way, searching and finding what is good and meaningful become inseparable parts of the same process.

5.4 Teacher 4

I am in a new situation, because what I would really like them to learn about is life. Not just specific knowledge. I want to introduce them to all this richness.

Teacher 4 is responsible for the ‘Foundations of music’ class at her music school. Since 2002, the course curriculum has incorporated music theory, solfège and ‘knowledge of music’, including music history. After the course, which runs over at least three years, students should be able to read and notate music, understand musical form and structure, and be well acquainted with different historical and contemporary musical styles. The Finnish National Board of Education recommends connecting theoretical studies to instrumental teaching and ensemble playing and encourages teachers to consider what is relevant in relation to students’ age, ambitions, and the instruments they play (FNBE, 2002, p. 17).

Because of the openness inherent in the course description, each music school is expected to develop a local curriculum. During the past few years, Teacher 4 has revised her ways of working, experimenting with new ideas and attempting to give priority to her own convictions about what works. In parallel, she has conducted research about the history of music theory teaching in Finnish music schools since the end of the 19th century.

I realised that the structure [of teaching and learning music theory] is absolutely senseless. The story is that the [national] interest in music school education exploded in a way that nobody was prepared for, which led to a lot of makeshift solutions. Music school teachers needed to get vocational training quickly, and one consequence was that they had no contact whatsoever with educational research. For some time, this insight made me very angry. Now that I’m over it, I’m starting to look forward.

According to Teacher 4, the new flexibility in the curriculum has resulted in some confusion. Earlier recommendations were more specific and systematic, and since teachers have a great deal of autonomy in deciding how to reach the curricular objectives, many of them have chosen to keep following the previous structure.

I participated in a seminar where questions were raised about where we are going. And they said, we need a captain on this ship. So I said, we don’t have a captain now, and the ship is still in harbour. People are running around wondering what to do, trying to reinstall the old captain. But I am saying that’s no solution, because the navigation systems have changed and the ship can’t be steered in that way anymore.

A particular challenge for Teacher 4 is that her school is located in a rural area with few opportunities to hear live performances of more than a limited number of musical genres and styles. In many cases, her students are only acquainted with mainstream pop and rock or local bands, and they have very limited contact with other genres outside their studies at the music school.

We expect them to play minuets by Bach but they have never really heard anything else than other students playing minuets at student concerts. They have no idea what a minuet actually is. Or Bach. It doesn’t mean anything to them.

One of the solutions she is developing is to spend more time listening to music early in the course. The norm is to cover music history when the students are about 15 years old, but according to Teacher 4, “that’s way too late. They are not interested anymore, and formal analysis is more difficult because they get stuck in notation”. Her younger students listen to at least a few minutes of recorded music every lesson: “I don’t say much, just ‘ok, now we are going to listen to this’. It’s like learning French. You listen, and you look at written text, and gradually you start to pick up things”. The second year, she comments briefly on style periods and brings music scores to follow, even if some students are not very skilled at reading music yet. The third year of the course is entirely devoted to listening and associated activities: learning to recognise different instruments and voices, discussing style periods, watching YouTube clips and movies.

My experience from last year is that they have quite astonishing knowledge after that, even when they haven’t taken a lot of written notes. Somehow, it sticks. Of course, I hope that they will find their way to classical music, which they don’t come into contact with anywhere else. But I don’t want to force it on them. I would rather, well, spread out my merchandise. Here, go ahead and take a look. Maybe there is something here that you will like.

In addition to the increased emphasis on listening, Teacher 4 also works more with improvisation than before. Students are encouraged to bring their instruments to class, play together in the more or less random combinations that arise, and explore the sounds that they can create. There has been much giggling and experimenting, and technical skills are developed that could not be achieved only by playing notated music. Two students improvised with great enthusiasm during a student concert, and were disappointed that they were not allowed to continue for as long as they had planned. Another group made hugely successful performances of experimental “ice music” during six consecutive concerts: “I could hardly get them back to the regular curriculum. They would have preferred to keep developing their music”. For Teacher 4, the most important aspiration with regard to improvisation is to expand the students’ own ideas of what music is.

[I want to help them] broaden the idea of what you have the right to do when you play and sing. That inventing things is allowed, not just for composers. This is my melody, these are my own sounds. It can be frightening, because it can sound exactly the way you feel. But I would like them to develop that courage so they can be outspoken and unafraid of doing things that haven’t been done before. I like contemporary music, so I have been wondering about how we get there, how new music is made.

Although Teacher 4 is confident that her new local curriculum is an improvement, she says that changing the teaching methods is always a risk and that she sometimes worries that some of the course requirements will not be fulfilled. In particular, she is wondering how the students experience the changes, and if they are learning what she is hoping they will learn: sufficient basics in theory and solfège, but also “that they are individuals and that they can

take what they need and want from the class". She wants to find out directly from the students, but first, she expresses a wish for peer response.

Teacher 1: All I know is that the album I made with [my folk music group] was born just because we have been sitting around playing [Swedish: *leka*, as in children's play]. In fact, I haven't improvised with them nearly as much as I should. We ought to improvise from the moment they can hold an instrument, so they become open to that. I think this sounds great.

Teacher 2: Improvisation is a big problem today. Probably because sticking to the strictly classical is safe. It's a place where you can live and do as you have always done, and you know that it's good, because nothing can go wrong.

Teacher 3: I think what you are doing is cool. Because if we don't [introduce the students to a wide variety of musics] in the music school, what will those small kids see of the world of music? They have jazz and pop and everything, but we also have to give them foundations. Where music comes from. They have to know about folk music and art music. Sure it's hard to play Mozart if you don't know what it is! It's like language. Baroque [music] and things like that, they're languages that [students] have to learn.

Teacher 2: Yes, and not just learn that 'this is very superior music indeed', or something like that. Making it concrete is always what's important.

Teacher 1: When students come to the music school, perhaps we should sing and make music with them from the first minute, instead of making them sit and listen to lots of information and divide them in groups and this and that. Music should be what is most important. What you are doing is really important, getting them to listen to music as soon as possible.

Having gained some peer support for the logic behind her way of working, Teacher 4 proceeds to the question of how the students experience the class. Since the changes are recent, it is too early to evaluate whether students' knowledge and interest have developed in a positive direction. "But I am a little impatient. I don't want to wait for five years before I know if the students are any happier." How to formulate questions to students becomes a main issue for Teacher 4, since she is not only interested in what they are able to remember.

They do as they are told, so I am not sure what they think. My impression is that although this [new way of working] is a little surprising for them, they enjoy listening and they enjoy being at the lessons. But how do I know what they have learnt? I am in a new situation, because what I would really like them to learn about is *life*. Not just specific knowledge. I want to introduce them to all this richness.

After discussion about research where pupil voice has been used to improve teaching and learning,¹³⁵ followed by some consideration of her own, Teacher 4 decides to design a questionnaire which she asks some of her students (a total of 16 students aged 13 to 15) to complete during class. The first part of the questionnaire is comprised of two sentences to complete: "The best thing about our lessons is..." and "The worst thing about our lessons is...". In the second part, the students are given a list of fourteen regular class activities: working

¹³⁵ Finney & Harrison (2010), Rudduck & McIntyre (2007), Vessey (2010).

with written theory tasks, learning key signatures from flash cards, improvising, singing, working with rhythm cards, music dictation, arranging music, listening to music, watching videos, looking at music scores, drawing while listening to music, watching movies, learning about instruments, and learning about music history. The students are first asked to arrange the items on the list from 1 to 14 from the most enjoyable to the least enjoyable. Then, they are asked to arrange the same items again based on their belief about how important the teacher thinks the different activities are. In the final part, there are questions about memorable musical experiences during lessons, about how “useful” the students perceive the lessons to be, and about what they would prefer to do during class.

The completed questionnaires are discussed during the following group session. For Teacher 4, the most surprising response is that while most of her students seem to enjoy listening to music, 12 students out of 16 do not think that their teacher considers listening very important. Similar surprises concern singing and watching music-related movies, such as Milos Forman’s *Amadeus*. In addition, only one student believes that the teacher thinks music history is important, while the teacher says that the subject is particularly close to her heart.

This has really made me think. I need to give the same questionnaire to other student groups, because now I’m very curious. Sometimes you ask questions without knowing exactly why you ask them, and only then you realise how important they were. When I started to read, I realised that I had really exposed myself to criticism. And I decided not to get hurt by anything. You have to ask even if you don’t like the answers, and use [the response] constructively. If students really hate something which we have to do nonetheless, maybe we can do it in a different way.

All in all, for Teacher 4, the student response seems encouraging. Several students write that what they like most about the lessons is that they “get to learn something”. One student cites the moment when he “finally learned” the system of relationship among key signatures as a memorable musical experience. With the exception of watching movies, which her students enjoy unanimously, preferences are scattered across all the activities mentioned, including written theory tasks and improvisation. One student writes that the best thing about the lessons is “variation”.

What I hope is that everyone will find something that they are good at and enjoy. In that sense, it doesn’t bother me that some find music arrangement fun while others think it’s the most boring thing we do. The aim is for all of them to try the activities, and then I will encourage them to go ahead and do what they are most interested in. It’s difficult to individualise teaching and learning music in groups, but this is one opportunity.

There are also challenges. One student has only used numbers from 14 to 99 when rating the 14 activities on the list. One returned questionnaire is partly unreadable because of motor oil stains from a cogwheel brought to class. Several students have written that listening to music is “boring”, “uninteresting”, or even “unnecessary”.

Teacher 3: Are you thinking of changing anything in the way you work?

Teacher 4: I think so. I am probably asking too much of the students during the year when we only listen to music. We need to anchor the listening in visual notation, singing, and some theoretical tasks.

The weighing and balancing here seems to take place between the teacher's ideal of individual freedom and her acknowledgement that some things need to be actively pointed out and taught. Her hope is that students will discover music that they enjoy if they are given the opportunity to listen to a wide selection of styles, but at least some students seem to require more scaffolding in order to learn, understand, and experience listening as interesting and meaningful. Making theory as concrete and enjoyable as possible is not a new idea for Teacher 4: she has taught scales while making her students walk up and down the long staircase at her school; "they had great fun doing that, figuring things out", and she has worked on visualising different triads while building snowmen with young students in winter. What she learns from the questionnaire is that students may quite literally not hear what she hears as they listen to music. Still, judging from their response, the students seem to value "just sitting" while they listen, drawing freely, allowing their minds to wander, resting from what they call the "extreme thinking" of theoretical tasks.

Teacher 4: It's ok that they daydream some of the time. But some of the time, I need to demand more of them.

Cecilia Björk: Maybe it's unusual for them that the teacher actually has some specific intentions with the listening?

Teacher 4: Exactly. And I can't trust that they [automatically] know what they are supposed to get out of it, or expected to learn.

Collaborating with instrumental teachers is one way of helping the students see the relevance of music listening. Teacher 4 has asked her colleagues to provide lists of standard repertoire for their instruments, and clarinet students have worked on arrangement tasks together with their teacher.

Teacher 5: That's a great idea. I think I have left the responsibility for the whole picture to our theory teacher. Sometimes I feel like a doctor who just brings in the next patient, you don't show any concern for the holistic approach that they talk about in medicine; the whole person. This entire thing with music and the violin.

CB [to Teacher 4]: It's as if part of the solution is right here, this dialogue that you have created. Then you don't have to make all the decisions and prove that you are right.

Teacher 4: That's exactly it. We should discuss these things more. And students need to get away from the old, atomistic learning. Sometimes, they are able to write down key signatures [mechanically], but they can hardly say anything about the music from looking at a real music score.

The responses to the questionnaire seem to indicate that live music, particularly performed by the students themselves, generates stronger memories and experiences. Sometimes, a recording also really "hits home, you can see on their faces when it happens".

One student played a piano piece that he had composed, and that made an impression. From my own experience, I know that if I have heard a really good performance, I want to go home and play the same music. That's what I would like them to develop, too.

Response from students who are specialising in rock instruments is overall more frustrated than the others. One of the students suggests that the theory and history of rock should be taught separately. There have been attempts in that direction, but "groups are too small" in the school. Teacher 4 also refers to her own conviction that students need to learn about a longer period of music history.

I stick to that. In my profession, I have to show them everything that exists, because they won't come into contact with [a broad array of genres] anywhere else. I have to show them that there are people who actually practice and play this music and who are paid for it, in real life. It's not just historical, it's living history. The students need live concerts, they need to hear symphony orchestras and know what these people look like. It goes for other styles as well. I have to tell them: "You can play this music, too. It's ok".

Fostering openness and versatility is important for Teacher 4, and one of her strategies is to immerse her youngest students in music that they are unlikely to hear in mainstream media or at school, making sure there is enough variety and unpredictability to create surprise and new experiences. Popular music is left to one side, mainly since the teacher is convinced that the students become acquainted with it anyway, but also because she finds her own knowledge and enthusiasm insufficient. The criteria she will not compromise with when choosing musical examples are to present only music that she honestly cares about, and only recordings that she sincerely appreciates.

You have got to love what you are doing. I think it shows. These young people and children notice. Once, I was playing a recording, and I wasn't thinking, and suddenly I noticed that I was starting to cry. First I was a little embarrassed, so I stood with my back towards them, looking out the window. But when the piece was over, I had to go back, and I thought, what am I going to say? And then I told them, "that piece came a bit too close right now, it was quite strong". And they did look at me a little, but they were ok with it, and then it was over. So I thought, well, this [music] means something to me, and I think that is what is most important.

When a school shooting took place in a nearby town, her students came to class extremely shaken. Some of the lessons were cancelled that afternoon.

Teacher 4: I decided to stay, but I knew I couldn't just dash ahead as usual. I carefully chose some music that we listened to. Those who needed to be quiet were quiet, but we also talked a little, those who wanted to talk. In a situation like that, you need some time. You can't think of everything at the same time. I followed my intuition there.

Teacher 2: As a teacher, you develop that intuition, being able to make judgments in the situation. I have had similar experiences when I taught children who had just arrived from the refugee camp. They had sudden spells of crying and there were moments when you just had to put everything aside. I had a huge stuffed toy, a fish

named Laban, and anyone who had a bad day could hold him and hug him. You are right, we need to give them that time. It's really important.

Teacher 1: It's being human, quite simply. Caring about someone else.

Teacher 4: But in a way...there is no space for that. We are not practising according to the plan. We're lagging behind.

Teacher 1: Well, we're lagging behind all the time anyway.

Teacher 2: And in that situation, you can't take anything in.

In the teacher's references to "practising according to the plan", there is covert but devastating criticism against sticking with unreflected routine regardless of the situation. Other less dramatic but still "absolutely senseless" practices which she mentions include the method of teaching and learning rhythm while sitting still, tapping a pencil against the desk.

Teacher 4: Reading rhythms like that, "taa-ka-taa, tan-ta-ka-taa", with the pencil...it's completely crazy. Older students can do it, but for the younger ones, it's really too abstract.

Teacher 1: They need to feel it first.

Teacher 4: But people still do this [demonstrates tapping with a pencil, her face deadpan, without expression].

Teacher 2: [Laughs] I know! I heard about it from one student. [He said:] "Never again!"

Similarly to the other participants, Teacher 4 mentions that one of her aspirations is that the students develop liveliness and alertness. Surprise, humour and some risk-taking are part of what she thinks is needed for both teaching and learning.

Once, in the first lesson that autumn, one student said, "In fact, you're slightly nuts." I was so determined to take them out of their initial introversion and bring them to life. I pulled out all the stops, and they were shocked. Of course, living up to that during the second lesson was a bit hard. But they all came back.

In general, Teacher 4 argues, researchers seem more interested in pre-professional training and higher music education than in how young students learn and understand the basics of music. She is very interested in the subject, and new questions have accumulated in the course of her own practice.

Teacher 4: I used to have a clear picture. This is how you teach, and that's it. But now I think this is really incredibly interesting. What is actually going on when children learn? How do they understand things?

Teacher 2: And why is it that some students hate music theory class? "It's boring, Mum, I hate it, I can't take it." I mean, something's got to be wrong somewhere. Of course, not everything can be fun. But why is it that some theory classes are more fun than others?

Teacher 4: You know, the education in music pedagogy at my conservatoire was largely worthless, as I said. I have almost no pedagogical education at all. But there was one thing my teacher told me: "You have got to have fun. And your students must have fun during your lessons. The rest will follow". And I have been trying to think about that. It's really nice to see when it happens, and it is actually true.

However, there are no cliché answers to what ‘fun’ is. For several of the students who have returned the questionnaire, “enjoyable” equals “real learning”. Some students have written that they trust the teacher to know what they need to learn, and they want to know what is expected of them. Then, “getting it” becomes a sign that they are moving towards where they need to be. Although Teacher 4 hopes that her students will eventually be able to judge for themselves what is relevant, she acknowledges that for some time, her role is to provide initial orientation. Here, additional balancing is required.

I have heard about visual arts education in Russia. They say that in the finest schools, the students learn all the old techniques and are able to produce amazing Rembrandt-style paintings. [But] when they graduate, they are told: “Ok, now you do your own thing”. And then they just can’t. That’s precisely where I don’t want my students to go. Maybe they won’t become professional musicians, but as human beings, [I would like them to] dare to take risks. Music can be a means for these students to do things they wouldn’t dare to do otherwise.

For the follow-up interview several months after the group sessions have ended, I visit Teacher 4 in the countryside where she lives. “As you can see, it’s at least 100 kilometres to the nearest symphony orchestra in any direction from here.” We discuss learning material which she is in the process of developing and publishing. “I needed to create something which follows the [new] method I am using. If someone else can use it, that’s great.” The leading principles in her material are activity and integrated learning where writing, drawing, singing and playing all support the students’ understanding of music. The aspiration is to do “what works”, which Teacher 4 defines as a focus on practising skills that increase independence.

CB: I remember the sense that you were developing something new, that you seemed almost sure of what you wanted to do, but had some worries.

Teacher 4: I have to say that I was standing with one foot in the air. Seeing that others were thinking, too, and that they were also about to take a step in some direction gave me the security I needed. If they are able to do it, so am I. And if I fail in some respect, there are no fatal consequences. I can keep changing things if they don’t turn out well.

Some colleagues who teach Foundations of music have shown interest in her material and teaching methods. An interview for another research project is scheduled. Others are worried, as she has been, that “the old” will be neglected.

But I say: “It’s not about throwing out everything that we have been doing. It’s maybe changing some things in some areas”. For me, embracing relative solmisation took me several years.¹³⁶ I had inherited an attitude of contempt for that method from my years at the conservatoire, but I didn’t know how it worked. Then, I needed a system, and found that it was actually the best available option.

¹³⁶ Solmisation is a method for memorising pitch and reading music in which syllables are used as support. In relative solmisation, the syllable ‘do’ always represents the tonic, or the keynote, and is therefore movable.

As the solmisation example shows, the issue for Teacher 4 is not about choosing between ‘old’ and ‘new’. Instead, what is important is “not to become rigid” and “to realise that you are in charge of the situation”. Students change, teaching in school changes, and every teacher generation has to find appropriate ways of using both old and new methods.

All music education is conservative in a sense. But you can’t just put the thing in a glass jar and bring it to the next generation. If there is something [my students] don’t understand, I will have to explain it in another way. The way I am is...if I do something, I want it done properly. No negligence.

Thinking back of the questionnaire she used to develop her teaching methods and materials, Teacher 4 says that the idea of asking open questions was good but tough, bordering on the foolhardy. “You really hand yourself over on a plate. I have seen other questionnaires about student satisfaction that are much less personal and expose nobody and nothing [to critique].” But she has no regrets. Being prepared to hear and understand what is going on with her students during lessons has helped her question her preassumptions about what is learnt and how students interpret her actions. In addition, she feels more confident about making changes and is ready to argue for them. When a student moved to another school where grades were given every year during the course, she had to send a report which explained what had been covered and what the student knew and was able to do.

I refuse to go back to [yearly grades] just so people can understand what I am doing. I would rather explain, and know that [the explanation] will be read by a colleague who is familiar with the subject and knows the kid.

Knowing her students well emerges as another important aspect of her practice, since she teaches them for several years. When the students become teenagers, she tends to assume the responsibility of being a supportive adult in their lives.

Teacher 4: I tell them to speak out and make their voices heard. That’s education, too. Anyway, if they come to their lesson in the afternoon and are terribly upset about something that happened at school, they need to be listened to before they are ready to learn. It gives me the opportunity to show that I care about how they are doing. That they are not just there for the lesson.

CB: You are a human being to them, and they are human beings to you.

Teacher 4: Yes.

The role model Teacher 4 wishes to be is outspoken, independent, and not too worried about seeming stupid or making mistakes. In her family, there has been “a tradition of strong women”; a community to which Teacher 4 feels that she belongs. She talks about her great grandmother who lived out on an island in the Finnish archipelago where she handled a household and raised ten children, by herself for at least half of the year, since her husband was a sea captain.

I have been thinking of her, and of my grandmother, and of my grandmother’s sisters who were primary school teachers and lived alone, managed on their own. I have felt this...that women can be strong. And that you can do what you want to do. My oldest sister too, of course, who paved the way for me in that respect.

It is in the lives of women such as these that Teacher 4 finds some of her strength and guidance.

Being someone who does what she wants, because she believes in it. That's where I think I aspire all the time. Trying to stay there, so nobody could ever constrain me and say: 'Now you will do as we tell you'.

Concluding analysis

For Teacher 4, there is intrinsic value in the musical works and interpretations that she want her students to hear and know about, and the students can only discover this value through contact with the music and the musicians who play it. She expresses a deep distaste for coercion of any kind, and hopes that with exposure to “incredible richness”, the students will find at least something that they like. Listening is important, but the richness that Teacher 4 is able to discern on the basis of her own knowledge and experience is not automatically captured by the students. Far from representing a dominant or prestigious culture in her community, classical music emerges in her account as a marginalised subculture which requires that practitioners develop a strongly independent mindset if they are to subsist. In the rural area where the music school is based, live performances of classical music are so rare that local children may be led to believe that the entire phenomenon is nonvital or irrelevant. Not all her students will understand what is worthwhile in historical music through unguided listening. The teacher's hope that students might come to understand and value music outside of the popular mainstream is certainly fulfilled at times, but it remains fragile. In addition, none of her colleagues at the school teach the same course, and she has limited opportunities for peer discussion about how to develop teaching practices. There is a sense of isolation in her stories, reinforced by her own identification with women who have raised children and taught in primary schools on remote islands.

Still, Teacher 4 will not let the situation deter her. During her inquiry, she relentlessly questions the education she has received, her own current teaching methods, and the belief that music theory can be taught by any music school teacher despite lack of specific pedagogical training. The autonomy and self-determination which she cultivates run through a number of aspirations described during the project. First, there is a quest to develop better teaching methods and materials for a subject that can seem abstract or even useless to the students and has a meagre tradition of educational research to fall back on. Second, her own relation to the music she teaches is characterised by a strong sense of meaning and love which she refuses to deny. Her stories convey periodical struggles to keep what she believes is important about music alive within the confines of an institution and its explicit and implicit traditions, demands and routines. Finally, there is also a strong theme of free and independent thinking, acting and creating, present in her own work and encouraged as desirable qualities for her students to develop, both in music and in life.

The metaphor Teacher 4 uses to criticise unreflected teaching traditions is the glass jar, brought intact with its content from generation to generation. Similarly, sticking to rigid routines even when something important or upsetting has happened might be seen as another version of putting music under a bell jar, out of touch with the students' lives, emotions, and what matters to them. This is unacceptable for the teacher, and in a dramatic situation, she changes the focus from the theoretical structures of music to its emotional and existential meaning and its immediate potential to provide support in a crisis. On another occasion, the tradition of a systematic and sanitised routine seems strong enough to prevent her from expecting the students to immediately understand what is going on when a piece of music moves her to tears. Nevertheless, she has been open, even vulnerable, about her own relationship to music. The written student response has encouraged her to articulate what she thinks is important even more distinctly. Her central aim is to widen students' perspective and then support them in making their own discoveries and choices, finding something for themselves that they like, that "hits home", and that gives an unmistakable feeling of being "for them".

In terms similar to those used by other participants, Teacher 4 insists on "bringing students to life", using energy, humour, inventiveness and a dose of provocation to prevent lethargy. The potential of music education to contribute to a subjective feeling of being strongly alive has been discussed in connection with the heuristic map above (2.3). Other themes that are present in the account of Teacher 4 seem to have affinities with ideas of *Bildung*: the emphasis on encounters with famous musical works and the understanding that music can support self-development towards individual freedom and independence. As the stories from student concerts illustrate, young students find value in personal experience of free musical self-expression, even in a brief and prematurely interrupted moment of improvised performance. Several times, the teacher's insistence that students create music together has first resulted in some clowning but then in unusual engagement and enthusiasm. Facilitating access to active musical participation and expression has called for patience, more humour, and an unwavering ability to resist mockery and maintain an encouraging attitude as new sounds and performances are born.

For students who might become interested in making music of their own or even becoming professional composers, the course is particularly important. One question raised by Teacher 4 is what enables a person to create new music. Her own answer, as it emerges through her practice, is an accepting environment in which students feels sufficiently safe to allow inner experience to be expressed in sound. Developing the courage to "speak out" musically, Teacher 4 believes, can transfer to other situations.

There seems to be a conflict or at least a paradox in aiming for empowerment while making students listen to music that initially feels both unfamiliar and uninteresting to several of them. After all, some of the students have already

found music that they care about, experience as sustaining, and want to learn to perform. Seen from the perspective of MacIntyre's definition of practices and their internal goods, the young rock musicians in her class may indeed be right to insist on having a course of their own, and they are likely to have their request met in the future. On the other hand, the other participants in the project point out that large portions of Western music theory belong to common practice and can probably be taught in a more general class. Teacher 4 shares this opinion, but the main reason for her choices seems to have a deeper dimension. If there is a take-home message in what she says and tries to exemplify in her classroom, it might be crystallised as: 'Don't narrow down your options prematurely. Be aware that there is more richness in music and life than you may know, look for something that is of real value to you, be sincere about your choices, and do not betray what you care about when you are under pressure'. Her intentions to "immerse" students in different kinds of music and have them push new boundaries are consistent with a leading thought in Kurkela's writings: that good relationships to music are most likely to be born when freedom and creativity are encouraged in a musically rich environment.

5.5 Teacher 5

I would never take the students to anything if I didn't know for sure that it is good. That is my responsibility as a teacher.

Teacher 5 has taught the violin at a music school for nearly 20 years. She talks about her work with amused distance, saying that she is still a bit surprised that she enjoys it so much. Having learned to play the violin at a Swedish municipal school of music, she continued her instrumental and music studies at a specialised upper secondary school. After graduating, she was unsure of what career path would be right for her.

Teacher 5: But I knew what I was *not* going to be, and that was a violin teacher!

Cecilia Björk: Do you have any idea of why you were so convinced?

Teacher 5: Maybe because it was all a bit sluggish for me. I have never been the type who practises a lot. I enjoy playing, but mainly because you get to play with others, the social [part of it].

Persuaded by some of her musician friends, she still decided to become a professional violinist, and ended up qualifying as a teacher as well. She was optimistic about the competence she had acquired during her teacher education, but concluded after some time in the profession that she "knew nothing at all" about what was appropriate to ask of children in terms of concentration and effort, or about the role of praise in teaching and learning. Gradually, and after having children of her own, she has revised her way of working in a more "realistic" direction. At least technically, she finds violin teaching "extremely easy", since everything that needs to be learnt is plainly visible: fingers, joints, the position of the bow. She enjoys the positive atmosphere in her small, rural music school, and describes supportive relations among colleagues and between

teachers and the director, who is encouraging about projects and new ideas. Nevertheless, during the initial group conversations about reflective practice, she expresses the worry that she may be stuck in a routine.

One challenge for Teacher 5 is that in her area, there are few opportunities for nonprofessional violinists to play with others on a regular basis. Families live far apart and the school is too small to maintain an orchestra of its own. “And children need time for other important things too. Horse riding, football, all those things that they do.” After graduating, students have no obvious context in which they can sustain their playing. “There they stand with their paper, and now their life without me and without the music school begins.” Her solution has been to “plant” students in a local church orchestra where she is also an active member. While this might not seem like the nearest choice for a young person who may or may not have religious convictions, Teacher 5 remarks: “You know, we have to do things differently here in the countryside”. The orchestra consists of amateurs, semiprofessionals, and professionals, representing an age span from about 15 to 75. Repertoire consists predominantly of Baroque music and the orchestra performs regularly for holiday celebrations during the liturgical year, often to audiences of several hundred listeners. Advanced students can join the orchestra while they are still in the music school, and many of them have continued for years afterwards. During the project, Teacher 5 decides to seek a deeper understanding about the learning that takes place in the orchestra and about what the presence of young violin students means to its more experienced members. In addition, the older amateur string players in the orchestra embody the curricular aim of a lifelong active relationship to music, and therefore present a particular interest to the entire group and to the researcher.

In the initial group sessions, Teacher 5 discusses her reasons for guiding students to the orchestra. First, based on her long first-hand experience as a member, she knows that the atmosphere is benevolent and encouraging. Similarly to Teacher 1, she refers to “the old blokes”; their friendliness and cheerfulness.

Teacher 5: I would never take the students to anything if I didn't know for sure that it is good. That is my responsibility as a teacher. It's important to prepare the participation very well. I know the children well and I know the orchestra, so I can be the connection, and that's good. I love those old blokes. Once when I had been away for a long time they said, “We are so glad to see you”, and the conductor said, “Warm welcome back. We want you to know how happy we are.”

CB: Is that what you want to give your students, too?

Teacher 5: Yes, absolutely. It's so sad, the way people live in society today. Not many say good things to each other. These old blokes, they are past the ego stage, so they can afford to be generous. They always say something positive in each rehearsal. They can shout “Bravo!” to a young cellist after a solo, or talk to the young violinists after the rehearsal: “Oh well done, [name], you really played that so beautifully!”

Second, the intention is to help the students understand what "real music life" is like, "that there are all sorts of people other than teachers or students who are their own age". It is good for young people, she believes, to be guided to "the diversity of people", gradually come to know "how to behave with different persons in an orchestra", and be supported in realising that it is enjoyable to play together. In addition, students are confronted with learning situations that would not occur in the music school.

Suddenly you are seated next to an adult, sharing the music on one stand, and conversation is not allowed while the music goes on. Somehow, you have to take responsibility for playing the right movement in the right key and tempo. Even if you or the other person make mistakes, it is still enjoyable, and you have to keep a straight face and keep going.

The teacher sees herself as "lifeline" in the orchestra. She knows that her students have sufficient technical skills and stylistic knowledge to participate, but "if everything goes wrong and you don't get it and a string fails because of tension loss, you can come to me". Another dimension of her support is psychological and social: "I am a good friend of all the older members and I know them well, so I can place the right child next to the right gentleman, where I think it will go well".

For her inquiry, Teacher 5 prepares a questionnaire which she sends to the members of the orchestra by email. The older members are asked what it means to them to have music students in the orchestra, whereas the younger members are asked about their experiences in an orchestra with musicians of all ages. In addition, all members are asked about what has sustained their interest in music over the years. Eleven older members and four students return the questionnaires and the replies are discussed during two group sessions. The senior respondents are unanimously positive, writing about the admiration they feel for the young students and the joy of seeing a rising generation develop and keep the orchestra vital. In addition, several respondents point out that playing in an orchestra is the best way to learn.

Playing in an orchestra requires other skills than just playing, i.e. following a conductor, listening to others, taking responsibility for the whole. Personally, I have learned all of this from professionals, and I have benefited enormously from trying to follow their way of acting in the orchestra. I hope I can transmit some of that even though I am an amateur. [R9]

You learn so much from sitting next to a professional who instructs, motivates and praises. Often, the young ones are the most ambitious, and they work hard to keep up. [R6]

Since I started in the orchestra as a student myself, I understand how important it is to be introduced to music-making as a way of spending time together with others. Being a member of an orchestra can encourage you to keep playing because it offers so much more. You get to share your interest in music with others and cheer each other on as you rise to new musical challenges together. [R8]

Similarly, the students find it rewarding to play with more experienced musicians. They emphasise learning and development, but also mention the social aspect of the orchestra.

You learn a lot from them, and in addition, they are friendly. [S3]

I get inspiration from the older musicians. [S2]

The fact that the orchestra consists of such a diverse mix of people, from teenagers to retired people, from happy amateurs to professionals, allows for a possibility to develop also in other ways than musically. You get to spend time with persons that you might never have talked to otherwise, but who are totally fantastic! Our conductor is very experienced and knows both the art of encouraging and the art of giving critique. [S4]

It's the perfect way of spending a Friday evening. [S3]

Even though Teacher 5 trusts that her students enjoy playing in the orchestra, she is surprised that they speak so warmly of the retirement-age members.

Teacher 1: Are you actually saying the rehearsals are on Friday night? *Friday night?*

Teacher 5: Yes, imagine. Friday from 7pm to 9pm, and we are never done before 9.15. They come, and they think it's fun. They like the music, and the conductor is so friendly, nobody needs to be afraid of him. He likes retired persons and children and music teachers and all sorts of people.

Teacher 1: It reminds me of when I used to play folk music with the old blokes. It's really significant for those young people. They will remember their entire life when they were sitting together with those guys and how they told jokes and how one of them couldn't play in tune. You know, the feeling. And sometimes you would wonder: Are they feeling ok, or is someone about to get a heart attack or something?

Clearly, some of the senior members become musical role models for the students. When professional musicians are present during the rehearsal, "everything sounds much better immediately" and everyone makes a special effort; "that wow-factor is important". But sitting next to an older violinist can also boost a student's self-esteem.

They notice that their own technical skills are actually quite good. Often, the retired gentleman is better at reading music and key signatures. But ha! you have a better spiccato technique,¹³⁷ and you get to realise...I am not that bad, even though I'm young! And my dear coteachers in the orchestra, the older members...when they make a mistake, they all laugh. "Oh, now that was really terribly bad!" Students can be terrified about failing in front of their peers, but failing in front of a retired person is nothing to be afraid of.

Teacher 5 mentions female teenage students as her main concern. Being a teenage girl is not easy, she says: "You have to be pretty, look exactly like your peers, and you have to be a lot of things that are no longer necessary for [women] my age. They have such a hard time". The orchestra provides a place

¹³⁷ Spiccato is a technique in which the violinist allows the bow to bounce on the string to produce short, elegant, detached notes.

which combines “something real, a craft” with the opportunity to have fun and spend time with a diverse group of people who all enjoy music.

Teacher 2: We forget the importance of grandparents in our society. Young people and their parents are under a lot of stress, trying to make things work. [Seniors] are the ones who can provide calm and balance and show the young [another] way of being. It’s about feeling safe.

Teacher 1: Maybe some of these young people don’t have grandparents, and they only have contact with [that generation] through the orchestra.

Teacher 5: I can also imagine that these children who are in the orchestra perhaps don’t talk so much with their grandparents, or they chat a little about this and that. But if you have something in common with someone that age, if you are both into music, then maybe the contact is more natural.

More generally, according to the teachers in the group, being together with other people is an education in itself. Young students learn music not just with their teachers but also with older children, parents and other members of the family, and through community music.

Teacher 4: We say that we are surprised that these younger and older people enjoy spending time together. But in fact, that is to underestimate what people can give each other as human beings. You may think that this is only about music, technique, and being concerned about one’s own level of performance. But in an orchestra, everyone is trying to [make it work], and then you automatically encourage and imitate each other. There is so much more in this than you would think. A lot of hidden knowledge is being transmitted. You can’t say exactly what it is, and yet it is the most important thing.

Teacher 2: Making music, listening to others. Time with friends and colleagues. It’s like being held in safe arms. And what is cool is that you [Teacher 5] become a fellow human being while you are there. [There are] all these effects, embedded in one another.

CB: I am thinking that maybe, for a young person, it can make an impression to see an older person for whom music is still a mainstay.

In the returned questionnaires, both senior and junior members of the orchestra emphasise enjoyment and a lively interest in music as main reasons for keeping up their playing. Several of them mention the possibility of resting from the work, duties and concerns of everyday life. The ancient idea of music as rest, therapy, and even a way of ‘purifying the soul’, is also present.

Playing music is a way of preserving your mental health. You get to do something you really enjoy. [R1]

Many times, I have pointed out that the reason I never suffered a burnout is that I have kept playing the violin regularly in my spare time. Music demands absolute concentration, so you forget all your worries. For example, playing the St Matthew Passion [by Bach] is an incomparable bath of purification for the soul. Music in itself is therapy for a human being. When in addition you have the possibility to give joy to large numbers of listeners, the happiness is complete. [R2]

Most respondents also mention the joy of playing with others and the good relationships in the orchestra as very important for their sustained interest:

“cheerful companionship”, “friends in music”, “the good atmosphere”, “we enjoy playing together”, “you get to meet pleasant people”. One young violinist writes about how enjoyment increases with skill:

The better you get, the more fun it is, because it doesn't sound *that* horrible when you practise! Playing the violin has also developed my general musicality. [My] aural skills and sight reading skills are better, I have had the opportunity to practise and play with others, and I have gained maturity and understanding for music as a mode of expression. In highly charged life situations, expressing your feelings through playing is close to therapy. [S4]

Finally, the conductor of the orchestra confirms that “socially, it all works well” and praises the way in which the older members take care of the younger. His wish is that in addition to Teacher 5, each instrument group could have a principal who would mentor younger musicians as she does. For the conductor, the students are not just a resource because they balance the age structure of the orchestra. Most importantly, “their playing is an excellent complement” and “their sound is a real asset as well. They contribute a lively, youthful freshness to the orchestral sound”. His own responsibility is to choose music which develops and challenges everyone. When he succeeds, there are overall advantages. If the music is interesting and difficult enough, professional musicians often want to participate, and the entire orchestra gets a boost.

For Teacher 5, the responses to her questionnaire confirm that she is preparing students in appropriate ways, both technically and socially, for participation in “real-life music”.

You can't play together with other people unless you are very good at listening to them and interested in having contact. That is what I want [the students] to develop, the wish of doing something together with others, the ability to handle their instruments, and knowing how to behave in different social contexts.

For the same reasons, she arranges a yearly concert where all of her students form an orchestra. The youngest ones are excited about performing together with older students whom they admire. Those who have played for a year or two are encouraged to realise that they have progressed and are clearly more skilled than the beginners. And the oldest ones “understand that they have to play with the kids, because when they were kids, someone played with them as well”. The teacher points out that “attitude education” is very important on those occasions, “not looking down on anyone else”, and she makes a particular effort to keep the “psychological atmosphere” safe.

Aspirations related to psychological well-being are also expressed during a group conversation about the importance of playfulness in musical learning.

Teacher 5: It is said that adults get depressed and life feels like a long, severe affliction because they don't play or have fun, which is what culture is about. It goes for the orchestra, but actually we should investigate how to involve the audience as well.

[cheers and laughter in the group]

Teacher 5: Because the audience can ruin the whole thing. They sit there, distinguished ladies wearing lipstick, looking disgruntled, and staring at [the students]. Like, ‘There absolutely better not be any false or rubbishy tone here’, a tone that would ruin this exquisite concert experience.

As the students learn to handle the pressure of performance, they are supported by the warmth and optimism of peers and older musicians. The young violinists are regarded as individuals while being encouraged to be part of the community. For Teacher 5, part of the responsibility of teachers and other older musicians consists in caring for their own psychological well-being so that they can be role models of confidence, curiosity, and ability to value and learn from what others are doing. Her own best teachers have been able to combine “serious levels of ambition” with humour, instructional clarity, and engagement in the students: “We were not some sort of objects. We were persons. And you have to have humour, otherwise it gets unbearably boring”.

In the account of Teacher 5, there are repeated references to balancing between the playful and the serious or the fun and the boring. Her own history of not being particularly interested in lonely practising has compelled her to find other solutions for herself and her students, even though she tells students that individual practice will make playing more enjoyable. The hours spent rehearsing with the orchestra are helpful, and technical exercises can be concentrated to lessons.

Some time ago, I thought I’d focus less on bowing exercises and scales. Well, then nobody was able to play anything at all, and that was even more boring, both for them and for me. It only took me a few weeks to notice that. So now, we do the boring stuff in the beginning of the lesson. And people say, “Your students have such excellent bowing technique.” Well, yes, but we do Ševčík [bowing exercises] every lesson.¹³⁸ It’s only for three minutes, but when you do it for ten years...

In addition, Teacher 5 points out, different students enjoy different things. Some prefer the predictable discipline of technical exercises to the more intense and emotional work with music. Part of her work is to know how to regulate her own “energy level”, adapting her own expressivity to each student.

CB: It’s as if there was something very physical and spatial in what you are describing.

Teacher 5: Yes, and I hadn’t realised how frightening I can be when I get enthusiastic and take a few steps towards the student or raise my voice, even to say “Very good!” Some students think I sound and look angry and almost start to cry. One very young new student heard me through the door, and she was afraid of coming in, because she thought I was angry. “I didn’t hear what you were saying, but you were talking with such a loud voice.”

Over the years, Teacher 5 says, she has learnt to talk as little as possible and to choose her words with care. “You know the right words to say, refrain from

¹³⁸ Otakar Ševčík (1852–1934), Czech violinist and influential teacher whose violin studies are still widely used.

babbling too much, and the students will feel safe.” What works best is to require full concentration for short moments, and be patient the rest of the time. She does not have the ambition to teach “great art”, but sees her work more as music therapy: “We try to learn how to play the violin as well as possible, but the psychological [dimension] is hugely important”. For some students, being allowed to focus only on the violin can offer relief from other demands and strengthen their confidence.

Whatever they were seen as before they came to the lesson, an unruly student at school or a difficult daughter, they are trusted to be something else in my classroom, right then. I take care of them for half an hour and they take the role of a capable violin student. We listen, we don’t drivel away, and we leave everything else to [the side]. When we are done, I tell the parent: “She did so well today, she was really able to focus”. Even if the parent says, “If only you knew” [laughter in the group], I ignore that, because I think it’s important to point to this other identity [of the child] and tune out the rest for a moment.

During the last group session, Teacher 5 talks about how the shared inquiry has renewed her inspiration. The initial worry that she was stuck in routine has been partly confirmed, but she is full of new ideas and describes a sense of “awakening” and “cheering up”.

I have realised that we really have to do more enjoyable things together with the students. I used to be one of those violin teaching robots, and I can see that this will be the death of us all! My own child is a music school student, so I get very straightforward feedback about everything that is wrong about our teaching [laughs in the group]. So I am aware of this critique that children have in their heads.

By the time of the follow-up interview, her increased interest in developing better learning conditions for her current students has extended to include adult violinists who may be partly self-taught or whose experiences of violin tuition have been negative. She needs to find a framework outside of the music school to realise her plans, but several adult students have already contacted her.

The violin is quite a technical instrument, after all, and if they could have private lessons and learn just enough to make the playing more enjoyable...And many of them say that they have traumatic memories from failed performances and don’t dare to play anymore. I feel so sad for them! You want people to be well, as human beings. And I think one way of being well is to be well together with one’s instrument. Like, me and my violin, we communicate and have a good time.

Part of her motivation is that she simply “likes people” and is concerned about media reports of unhappiness across age categories in society. In addition, her own experiences of playing in an orchestra have shown her the importance of combining musical and social activity, and of interaction between generations.

Teacher 5: It’s a natural way of being together, you don’t have to discuss when to meet. The possibility to spend time with others and communicate without having to do any small talk...the way we are making music is how we are feeling. If we can make music in a relaxed way, enjoy it, laugh a little, and try to perform as well as we can, but not beyond what we are able to do...

CB: Then music becomes a human thing.

Teacher 5: Yes! If you have an instrument, you have the key to very great happiness and togetherness. I would like to bring that out and make it work.

CB: And since you know how to do it yourself, you could teach others how to do it.

Teacher 5: Yes.

Concluding analysis

According to Teacher 5, the initial purposes of having violin students join a community orchestra were to help the students sustain their playing after graduating from the music school and to bridge the gap between lessons and music-making “in real life”. However, as her inquiry demonstrates, the learning that takes place in the orchestra has many dimensions.¹³⁹ The students are connected with “coteachers” of all ages. The conductor helps find repertoire which is interesting and challenging enough to energise the entire orchestra, thereby pointing to goods that can be found in music itself. As members of an intergenerational orchestra, the students are introduced to a variety of reasons for cultivating a long-term interest in music: continuing learning and development, inspiration, companionship and mutual support, participation in a positive and encouraging social context, enjoyment and relaxation, getting to know a variety of people who share the same interest, spiritual dimensions of music-making, and the possibility of giving joy to others. These meanings and values are better experienced in practice than explained during individual lessons at the music school.

Changing the context of teaching and learning from the confines of a classroom to a community also changes the way in which students experience their own playing. Their musical and personal development is followed with affection by the older members of the orchestra. A “rubbishy tone” is no disaster; participation and continual small successes are what matters, and there is warm support during both rehearsals and performances. The sound of a student’s violin is literally ‘heard’ in several ways: although it presents qualities that can be measured against objective criteria, it is also the “lively, fresh, youthful” sound produced by an individual who is known and appreciated as a person by the others in the group. In the concert snapshot offered by Teacher 5, two images are juxtaposed: a polished audience, imagined to expect flawless performance and pure aesthetic experience, and a benevolent community in which adolescents are supported in their development but relieved of demands on immaculate appearance and musical skill. Internalising encouraging attitudes allows the students to learn how to contribute to a friendly atmosphere, adds resilience to their interest in music, and gradually helps them to gain the assurance to cope with demanding performances in front of critical listeners.

Similar symbolic conversations where the teacher introduces voices that ‘talk back’ to disquieting, overly critical comments are described in several other situations. She takes care to place “the right child next to the right gentleman”.

¹³⁹ See e.g. Beynon and Alfano (2013), Heiling (2000).

During concerts at the music school, she clearly states that students are expected to be supportive of each other. When pressure from parents or the school threatens to become discouraging, she narrows the focus to specific qualities that the student is able to demonstrate: concentration, perseverance, the ability to handle a difficult instrument. Together with older amateurs who have been disheartened by negative experiences, her aspirations are to teach sound-improving technique and to support holistic aims of participatory music-making.

Understood in the light of the heuristic categories developed in 2.3, Teacher 5 promotes all the aspects of music that have been thought to contribute to the good in a child's or young person's life: access to musical experience, expression, appreciation, and active participation; the potential to enhance well-being and support a well-lived life; being beneficial for individual development and for the relationships which sustain the person; pointing to what is of central or existential importance in human life. In the account of Teacher 5, a good relationship to music is inherently social and embedded in benevolent contexts where the individual is appreciated and feels welcome. However, this does not mean that musical goods are secondary. "The right repertoire" is essential; even the most caring and friendly atmosphere is not enough if the music itself does not present enough interest, challenge, and potential for musicians to improve their playing. Teacher 5 is clear on this point: "I can live very well without music, but I cannot live without Baroque music". She does not expect her students to share the exact same affinities, but approaches repertoire choice as a quest for something that will be as engaging for them as Baroque music is for her.

Practices change, but the violin as an artefact has not changed; time-tested exercises for developing solid technique still work and are defended by Teacher 5. Similarly to several of the other participants, she points out that in addition to technical and musical skill, she aspires to foster personal qualities which will open the way to musical participation and long-term development: focus, listening skills, confidence, courtesy, humour, patience, interest in other people. Here, as in the account of Teacher 3, goods of excellence are seen as representing both the road and the aim, which means that the teacher needs to keep cultivating the same virtues. A crucial insight contributed by Teacher 5 is that strong negative experiences can undermine both musical and personal qualities that are helpful for participation. Consequently, creating conditions in which a lifelong good relationship to music can be born and sustained is not something which is taken care of once and for all during a young student's years at the music school. Her own engagement in amateur violinists for whom music school "was horrible the whole time" expresses both her aspiration to set things right and the hope that later in life and in better circumstances, it is still possible to find what music can be about.

5.6 Shared themes

In this section, I will summarise a selection of themes that engaged all teachers in the project regardless of their own main inquiry. The issues fall into eight thematic groups, provided here with interpretive headlines for the sake of conciseness. The different issues are expressed as aspiration or concern, need for more knowledge, and calls for practice development. Still, what is communicated here is not necessarily a list of unsolved challenges. As the examples will show, the participants have contributed suggestions, experiences, and interpretations; some of the quotes include references to improved situations or actions that make sense to the teachers.

1. Understanding musical practices

As learning environments for musics that have been performed in multiple contexts throughout about a thousand years of music history, music schools have serious limitations. The teachers argue that unless students are actively guided to other practices and performances than the ones they encounter in their everyday lives, they can form narrow and limited conceptions about music(s) and musicians.

Teacher 3: It's important to know where music comes from. It didn't start with pop or jazz. It didn't start with classical music. There is a long continuity, [and the students need to get a sense of] of what and why.

Teacher 1: YouTube is a great resource. It really extends what they can do at home. But you need to give them some keys to different styles.

Teacher 2: In schools, there is a lot of band playing and not enough singing. Not that I have anything against band playing, but they should sing more. Where do we go if that stops already in primary school?

According to the teachers, experiences of real-life practices are essential, both inside and outside the institutional frameworks of music schools.

Music school director [in interview together with Teacher 3]: Depending on the policy that the music school will choose with regard to groups and orchestras, the students will relate differently to playing together, and to the [idea] that there is a community. Will they even discover that?

Teacher 5: One of my best teachers made sure we all went to hear the great violinists who played in Finland, so I heard Itzhak Perlman who was very active at the time. Isaac Stern and Ida Handel didn't play like in the recordings anymore, but they had such dignity.

Teacher 1: I sent three young students to a symphony project with professional mentors. The repertoire was extremely difficult, and I didn't know how they would cope. But they developed immensely. The conductor taught them that he won't start until he has eye contact. They learned to count, to read new signs, to rehearse in a professional way, to dress for concerts. Playing Vivaldi [at a lesson] was a piece of cake after that.

Teacher 5: Even if playing in the church orchestra is not necessarily a religious experience [for the students], I think it's part of their cultural education to know what the music we are playing is about and how it is related to holiday celebrations and the

Mass. They feel the solemn atmosphere in the church [during concerts] and they understand more about what is adequate [in that context].

2. *Promoting musical practices*

Students and teachers can share musical affinities to a greater or lesser degree. For teachers, it can be conflictual to feign interest or to neglect what truly engages them, especially as they are expected to encourage and embody lifelong interest in music. There is a fine balance between influencing the students too much and too little.

Teacher 1: It's a lot of fun to play in a group, and I hope the kids enjoy it as much as I do. But there is a certain egoism in my teaching, because I clearly want to get them to the point where we can make music together and do the things that are most fun.

Teacher 4: I see it as my responsibility to offer them everything they don't get to hear at school, for example. We have to show them everything, and then I can say, "Now you can choose, now I have shown you how much there is to do and listen to".

Similarly to the music school teachers in the study by Holmberg (2010), some of the participants feel pressure from commercial music.

Teacher 1: The market forces, the corporations decide what music we make nowadays. Media govern, together with the record industry and music contests. It's about getting rich. There is a risk that music schools buy into the same as the media [and] that we play the same music as everyone else. The kids hear the same [music] everywhere. And they won't get much else through [compulsory] school, it's just bands and pop.

Teacher 2: What we see on television is supposed to be 'very big' and people publish all sorts of rubbish on YouTube. Many of our students are excellent, I don't see why we should apologise for what we are doing. When are we going to start believing in ourselves?

3. *Finding balance*

Music can be pleasurable but gaining proficiency often requires long-term hard work. As pointed out by Kurkela (see above, pp. 69–70), music school teachers and students may also be balancing on the boundary between what is 'almost real' (music as a symbolic realm) and what is 'too real' (music as a means of gaining a sense of approval and psychological security). The participants use several strategies for finding the right measure: adapting demands to the context, alternating between effort and relaxation, and moderating pressure during performance.

Teacher 2: If I am working with a professional choir, I have very different demands. But I think we are sometimes asking too much of our students. It can't just be 'Wrong position!' and 'Well, *that* intonation was rather mediocre today'. Every now and then, we need to say: 'Wow, you did that so well'.

Teacher 1: You can work in periods. Sometimes, you have to be really, really strict so that everyone makes an effort. But in between, you play just for the fun of it.

Teacher 2: I think the conductor [of the church orchestra described by Teacher 5] has got it right. They don't have the ambition to sound like [a leading symphony orches-

tra]. As you say, we do it differently here in the countryside. But we find that balance.

Practising and accepting the necessity of regular practice are described by one teacher as skills in themselves.

Teacher 1: It is not far from being the most difficult thing that we have to teach them. Practising properly, and for long enough periods of time. They need some real insane gigs to prepare for, otherwise they will lose the grip. And we need to teach them how to do the rough labour.

Stage fright can be a problem, exacerbated by the tradition of having students perform in ranking order according to how advanced they are. Teacher 2 describes “rigid” and “horrible” concerts where voice students miss the opportunity of hearing each other because they are waiting nervously backstage. In addition, she criticises what she considers to be an exaggerated focus on evening dresses which make the entire event look more like a beauty pageant than a concert. “It’s like ranking them as persons. I don’t like it.” After discussion in the group, she reports during the last session that she has tried something new: a concert with mixed genres where the order of performance is determined by lottery. “The whole thing became more informal. The students talked a little about what they were going to sing and about their relation to the songs. It was really very enjoyable.”

Very young students cannot be expected to wait, Teacher 5 points out. Still, breaking the tradition of establishing ranking order through order of performance can improve performance by taking away some of the build-up of nervousness. Other ideas include grouping performances according to style and genre instead of level, changing the frames of the concert by having young children in the audience, and arranging concerts in retirement homes rather than at the music school. Several of these strategies seem to build on the idea of taking music closer to the everyday life of the community.

4. Understanding the student

A music school teacher often becomes a significant, long-term adult contact in the life of the young person. According to the participants, getting to know the students is part of their job: students are individuals, learn in different ways, and go through better and worse times in their lives during their years at the music school.

Teacher 3: Copying someone’s teaching style won’t work, because all students have their own personalities. [I think] social contacts are very important [for teaching and learning], but some students prefer individual lessons, and that should be respected. It’s important to think about each student, what they are like and what works for them.

Teacher 4: In a group, though, you never know all students to the same extent. You never see them individually. [One consequence is that] you may think they are able to do certain things even though they aren’t.

Complex questions include how issues related to gender and sexual orientation influence or might influence teaching and learning in music schools. Attempts are made in the group to single out general differences between female and male students, but counterexamples abound. Some of the participants suggest that female students seem more perfectionist and conscientious whereas male students seem to worry less about making mistakes. But during the conversations, reflections become nuanced and are also related to the teacher's role.

Teacher 1: The difficulty is to get the girls to really go for it. You need to make them exaggerate, or [the music] won't come out. Again and again, you go: "No, more! More! Even more!"

Teacher 2: Boys go for it even if things go wrong.

Teacher 3: But with small boys, I have to talk softly. If I said 'that wasn't good, play it again from the top' in a hard voice, they would cry and leave the room.

Teacher 1: I think [all of this] is very individual. It's really about the student's personality.

Teacher 5: All my students are girls at the moment. I don't think I would even be able to take good care of boys, and that is unfortunate, because there are so few boys in music schools.

Among the five participants, only Teacher 2 has experienced that students bring up their sexual orientation in conversation. Teacher 5 admits with some self-mockery, but not without concern, that she does not "understand anything at all about things like that".

Teacher 2: Usually, by the time [students] talk about it, I already know.

Teacher 1: But maybe they want to tell you because it's important for them.

Teacher 2: Yes, and I like that they tell me, because you might [make mistakes]. "Ok, it's good that I know." Not that it actually changes how I work. But [it's better] to be sensitive to [those aspects of the student's life], just like we are sensitive to everything else.

It is harder for a music school student to be a member of a religious minority, Teacher 2 argues, than to be gay or lesbian. For example, standard popular repertoire includes music and performance practices which are considered offensive in some communities. Similarly, Teacher 5 points out, atheists may be expected to perform religious works. Most of the time, according to the teachers, there are no conflicts. Occasionally, however, students need to be directed to teachers who share their convictions.

Difficult periods in the students' lives range from situations in the music school to serious illness, economical hardship in the family, or acute crises of other kinds.

Teacher 2: Empathy is very important when you work individually with students. They [need to know] that we care about them and want to help them and that we are there for them when they need us. But not all teachers are willing to deal with that.

Teacher 1: I have seen just about everything. And in the beginning, I felt that I was not competent to handle [all of that]. Sometimes, you feel more like a psychotherapist than a teacher.

Cecilia Björk: I think it is quite common that students talk to their music school teachers about important things. [But] psychotherapists have supervision. They would never be left alone to think about what to do in a difficult situation.¹⁴⁰

Sometimes, the teacher can offer support by helping students to focus on their music: as a reminder of what they are good at, or as temporary relief from brooding or an ongoing critical situation.

Teacher 2: But there are limits, and we need to recognise when it's too much for us and the students need professional help.

CB: This might be related to experience and professional judgment. Knowing what to do in a particular situation.

Teacher 2: Yes, and all of us have worked for many years already. I think we can trust that we are able to relate to what we have seen before, "Ah, this is similar to that situation". And I still think that it can be important to have an adult outside the family that they can trust and talk to. I know of one student who hardly played at all for an entire year. Instead, he mainly talked with his teacher about adolescence. And it was important that the teacher was there for him.

Teacher 3 works consciously to support students through adolescence and other periods of intense development. In times like that, helping students to keep up their playing is not only a matter of musical competence, as demonstrated in a quote from one of the interviews that Teacher 5 makes with two of her former students:

Student 1: I remember that when I was about to start secondary school, I didn't want anyone to know that I played the violin. I was terribly afraid that people would think I was weird. But I got over that after a year or two.

However and perhaps problematically, several of the teachers note that what they do in response to specific challenges is based more on experience and personal judgment than on theoretical knowledge of, for instance, developmental psychology or special education, since such subjects were not included in the education they received.

Teacher 1: We should have the possibility of cooperating with psychologists, physiotherapists, coaches, anyone who could provide supervision. The students need that, too.

¹⁴⁰ Kurkela and Tawaststjerna (1999) found that in addition to providing musical expertise, music school teachers were sometimes the only adults who could offer support and security and whom students trusted enough to speak about serious life crises. "As a human being, the teacher may end up in heavy situations, feeling that he or she is moving on the very edge of his or her professional competence, or beyond it." (p. 117). The authors believed that professional supervision or similar forms of support would probably be needed in order to meet these challenges and protect mental well-being among teachers.

CB: Bringing together competence, so that not everything depends on one teacher who has to decide what to do?

Teacher 1: Yes. And why wait until everyone gets sick before you push the right button? We should make it [preventive], be one step ahead. That way, people have more energy to do their job.

5. Understanding the student's relational world

As evidenced in all of the five teacher stories, teaching and learning are embedded in networks of social relations which sustain the musical practices. During conversations in the group, the personal and sometimes fragile nature of these networks is highlighted. Teacher 3, for example, tells the story of how an entire group of violin students was about to stop playing because several of their friends and their longtime teacher had moved away at the same time.

Teacher 5: In our orchestra, there are key persons who are important for the whole group. If someone takes a break or stops, there can be confusion, and recovery always takes quite some time. [This] happens every now and then, since an orchestra has its organic life.

Although social aspects of learning are important, then, simply playing in any group or any orchestra is not enough. Teacher 5 adds: "Sometimes we have cooperated with other orchestras and it hasn't been the same thing". It is the support from people who care personally about the student and understand the musical practice that matters, as one of the young members in the orchestra writes:

My grandfather has always been proud of my violin playing, because he used to play himself. Until last year, I played on his violin. Many of my friends are also into music, and those who have inspired me most are the ones who also play classical music. Others can sometimes have a hard time understanding why you spend so much time on the violin, but [my friends] have always accepted that. [S4]

On the other hand, long-term interest in music can come under social pressure by friends and family:

Student 2: Sometimes I get comments like "You used to play in a music group, didn't you?" So I get a little angry, and [I say], "Well, we are still playing, you know." And now that I have children, some relatives, especially male relatives, seem to think that it's time to stop or take a break. "Oh, so she is doing things for herself as well?" And of course I want to do that!

Building the 'right' kind of relationship to parents is a skill in itself, articulated by several teachers as an ability to regulate the degree of involvement. The confidence between student and teacher grows when the child knows that the teacher has met and talked to the parents.

Teacher 1: You have to get to talk, and the parent has to have the opportunity to say: 'What is it, actually, that you are doing?'

Teacher 2: Also, parents don't always understand what it means to study in a music school. They don't know what it requires, and sometimes they have decided that their child is going to become an excellent musician, regardless of the criteria [for excellence].

Teacher 5: One of my colleagues who works in [a larger city] tells me that to some parents, music school teachers are nothing. The parents buy services from us, and [therefore] feel entitled to dictate how the children should be taught, what they are going to play, and what classes they need to participate in. It's a culture that I haven't encountered out here.

Teacher 4: Parents who interfere too much can be a bigger problem than those that we hardly ever see. There are students who prefer to keep their life with the instrument and the music school separate from the rest. It's their own thing.

CB: So this is something you have to handle case by case?

Teacher 2: Yes.

6. *Protecting inspiration and vitality*

Several of the teachers emphasise the importance of staying inspired, “staying in balance”, and preventive protection of well-being in their own lives in order to sustain energy and engagement. Having the strength to teach is a matter of long-term stamina, according to Teacher 3: “The 35th lesson in spring is the most difficult one”. But what is really required is attention to one's life situation as a whole:

Teacher 1: It all comes down to the teacher and the teacher's understanding of himself. How he really is doing, deep down. In the end, that is what influences everything. [Whether] the teacher is able to cope with himself, his family, the colleagues, the school, the town; maybe he wants to move to the US, who knows?

One sign that strength is running out is that teaching is done “on autopilot”, Teacher 1 remarks, or in an overly pedantic, “teacher-like” way. The reason can be as simple as lack of sleep, she says, but there are other situations that can drain teachers of vitality. For example, loneliness can be straining. Teacher 3 points out that the apprenticeship tradition used to offer a certain protection against professional isolation: “As an apprentice, you could always ask the master. And [as a teacher], you could ask someone who had more experience of different students”. Also, not being allowed the time to keep up one's own playing, according to Teacher 2, is “like taking the heart out of a human being and expect her to stay alive”.

Throughout the conversations, the participants use metaphors related to feeling alive and feeling dead, “surviving” as music school teachers, finding ways of making music outside the institution (“without it, I would probably be half dead by now”), and trying to develop their teaching in order not to be “pretty much dead” after forty years of saying and doing the same things. The same concern for liveliness is highlighted as aspirations for the students:

Teacher 5: Sometimes, students can seem like zombies. Then, my main ambition is for them to wake up and become aware that they are making music. I used to think that they just weren't that interested, but I have learnt that even long-term zombies can love playing and actually make good progress.

A similar metaphor is used in a quote about being able to cope with music itself:

Teacher 3: I talked to a violinist who had retired from [a leading British orchestra] and taught summer courses. He said that his main job was “to teach these young guys how to cut the crap, and how to survive the most difficult passages [in the music] without dying”. [laughs]

The hope is that students might find “the fire” or “the drive”¹⁴¹ to keep them going. As examples in the next sections will illustrate, music school traditions themselves can stifle the enthusiasm.

7. *Protecting joy*

The participants in the study believe that enjoyment and physical movement are important in music teaching and learning. Not everything can be fun, but an element of playfulness is fundamental and needs to be drawn out; once it happens, laughter and enjoyment are contagious. However, the teachers note, music school practices more generally still seem to be influenced, at least to a degree, by a tacit understanding that strictness is preferable.

Teacher 5: When I studied for my teacher degree, nobody would have encouraged any exuberant ideas or projects. The whole atmosphere at the classical department was a bit repressive and transmitted some old Russian-Finnish tradition, you know, the knitted eyebrows. There wasn't a lot of fun, but ok, we [the students] did have some fun in spite of all that.

Teacher 1: I think that has changed now. It has loosened up considerably.

As defined by the participants, ‘fun’ equals “pleasure”, “euphoria”, “endorphins”, “feeling high”, experiencing a sense of “purification”, being “fully engaged”, and “sharing joy”. Body movement favours the feeling:

Teacher 5: If [the students] get to move, it's more fun, and they get to laugh. Because you have to laugh.

Teacher 1: I heard one teacher tell the students to stand still when they are playing [the violin]. It's hard to get things right that way, at least in folk music. The playing is very angular.

Teacher 3: Where are the roots of that? Standing still with just the arm moving? I don't see where that [tradition] comes from.

Teacher 2: You really need to get the rhythm in the body. I have heard students play Chopin waltzes which didn't sound like dances at all.

Lack of playfulness may be a consequence of cultural patterns in education, Teacher 1 suggests.

Teacher 4: Well, what is playing music, if not playfulness on the highest level? But we are supposed to wear tail coats and sit up straight and behave, that is the sign that it's for real. Playing folk music with little boys may not be for everyone, but I still think [playfulness] is important.

Teacher 2: I don't understand why we should have to be so [puritan], so old-fashioned.

¹⁴¹ In Swedish: *Det där stinget*.

Language is another source of fun which may be restricted unless the teacher actively decides to adopt an easy-going attitude. For the Finland-Swedish teachers in the study, using their local dialects in a formal school environment is something like a small act of noncompliance. They point out that home-dialects can be of great importance for teaching and learning as well as for the relation between student and teacher.

Teacher 1: It's such a lot of fun. I bring out all the old expressions that I learned from my grandmother and use them freely. It's very enjoyable, because it's our common mother tongue. Many of the words don't even exist in standard Swedish, so the language we use becomes much richer.

CB: And it's a deeper emotional language?

Teacher 1: Yes, and you get to use your imagination more.

None of the conditions for teaching and learning that the teachers highlight as important are 'forbidden' in any formal way. Still, there are traces in their conversations about how things 'really ought to be' according to unwritten rules which, in fact, have a negative influence on musical practices as well as teaching and learning. The teachers question the origins of these 'rules' and do not consciously endorse them. Still, they notice, there are moments when doing what they believe is right is accompanied by a sense of insurgency.

8. Resisting pressure

As the music school teachers reflect on how to develop their practices, they point out a number of sometimes conflicting opinions about what they need to do. Subtle or less subtle pressure to comply with overt or tacit requirements can come from several different directions, as discussed above: tradition, students and their families, commercial interests. But routines can also be upheld by a local school or a cluster of nearby schools, or adhered to because of the striving for national uniformity. During the first session, Teacher 3 introduces the presentation of his new ways of working by saying jokingly that he "might be thrown out" of his music school once it is found out what he is actually doing. From the joint interview with the teacher and the director of his music school, it is clear that no such risk exists and that his work is in fact very much appreciated. The director expresses the hope that his school has changed since the times when music schools were what he describes as "closed systems" in which windows were "tightly shut to any glimmering from the outside". In those days, he says, students who wanted to perform or make music in other contexts needed permission from their school, "and all of that felt incredibly alien to me".

Still, the teachers are aware of tacit social control, or what Teacher 1 calls "a strange feeling".

Teacher 1: It's as if the music school itself dampens what you are doing. Isn't that strange? You are inside a system. And people have their eyes on each other, even if they don't really say anything.

Teacher 2: [In order to make changes], the teacher needs to go out on a limb.

Teacher 4: And what will the colleagues say?

Teacher 1: Some of them may be interested, but it depends completely on the person.

Almost imperceptibly, old routines can return even if there has been a decision to make changes. For example, the new curriculum opens for the possibility of passing exams during student concerts, but there are both teachers and students who prefer to uphold separate jury examinations in classrooms.

Teacher 1: Within a music school, people are very different and have different opinions of how things should be done. I have tried both [exam models] and they both have positive and negative sides. My conclusion is that each and everyone will have to do what they think is best, as long as the students pass the exam.

Making joint decisions for the entire music school can have negative consequences, she says, because “some things simply don’t work for a teacher”. In her school, the solution has been to allow teachers to experiment and make their own evaluations. Teacher 5 describes a similar approach in her school, adding that students’ own wishes are often taken into account.

Teacher 1: One reason [that students prefer to do their exams alone in a classroom] can be that they want to avoid the envy of friends who might come and listen.

Modifying or preserving ways of working on the basis of practical wisdom and reflection, then, is more acceptable to the teachers than making changes for the sake of change itself.

Teacher 4: But I don’t think this could have been possible twenty years ago. It used to be these scales, these etudes, this collection of exercises. What? *Other* etudes? Why?

Teacher 3: These have been fine for 150 years! [laughs in the group]

CB: It seems like what is going on is that a discussion is opened. Some of those etudes may be excellent.

Teacher 2: We do our old Vaccai studies [laughs] as we have always done, and it’s great to have them. *But* you can develop them, too, and use them to support something new.

Teacher 1: I agree with what [Teacher 4] said, why should we only play what we have always played? On the other hand, why should we always believe that what is new is better? That is what our world is like at the moment. Everything old is bad. Everything should be renewed. And there is a risk that we throw out things that are really good. It’s this balance.

Teacher 3: But you need to think about what the student is like, and what is appropriate for the student.

Teacher 2: Exactly.

Focus on students as emphasised here should not, however, be understood as the “abdication” referred to in the study by Holmberg (2010). Commitment to finding “what works for the student” involves the capacity to offer specific and precise help based on long experience.

Teacher 1: When you have played a piece for 10 or 15 years, you know all the difficulties, so you can avoid all the circuitous routes. You know that right in this place,

there is that note that they won't find unless it is indicated. I know exactly what is going to happen, so I can say, "Watch out, prepare, pause properly here." And that is experience, it is accumulated knowledge, and we have to be allowed to make the most of it.

Practice development seems to take place at the frontier not just between tradition and renewal but also between social control and accumulated professional experience, and there is much potential for frustration at the fault lines.

Teacher 2: Let me ask you a terrible question. Why are we referring to our ideas as 'crazy'? Why are we apologising? Excuse me for being able to sing. I do apologise.

Teacher 1: It's our upbringing. It's the Jante law.¹⁴²

Interference from administration without insight into musical practices is described with a mixture of desperation and amusement:

Teacher 4: The head of my conservatoire said on his first day: "Why can't all the piano students be taught in the same class?"

Teacher 3: Right. And why can't three driving school students share the same car?

In sum, according to the participants, music school teachers who wish to engage in practice development have to be able to simultaneously consider and question external pressure and their own routines. This is a demanding task which requires outer and inner conversation as well as personal maturity and integrity.

Teacher 2: Every time there is a new technique, it's always [considered] so significant and great and all. But there is always a backside to everything. I have been talking with colleagues to see if we could find consensus on certain things. As a teacher, it's really important to have self-knowledge, to know when it's necessary to learn something new, [but also] 'Can I assimilate this, does this suit me?' That involves maturation processes. You can feel like 'Ugh, I'll never start doing that!' And then, suddenly, it occurs to you, 'But there actually is something here'.

Teacher 4: In the end, it's up to the person. You have got to do what you have got to do.

Concluding analysis

The conflicts involved in some of the issues above can often be seen as mismatches between music school practices or societal expectations and 'real-world' priorities, including those required in musical practices themselves. For instance, although it is clear and commonsensical that the relationships surrounding a young person's music-making are important, music schools may fail to take these conditions into account if the prevailing attitude to lessons and exams is bureaucratic, building on impersonal routines. The need for teaching

¹⁴² "The Jante law" refers to a set of rules of social convention described in the novel *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* [A fugitive crosses his tracks] by the Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose (1933/1968). Comparable to the 'tall poppy syndrome' in English and often used colloquially in the Nordic countries, the law of Jante condemns individual success and achievement as inappropriate and a threat to the community.

and learning to be personal is particularly apparent in examples from teaching and learning in groups and orchestras or from contexts related to the student's family background. Participants also describe their grievance at the experienced demand that teachers should be prepared to downplay their own preferences, knowledge, and judgment.

When the teachers say that they do "crazy" things, they tend to refer to activities, teaching methods and projects that are neither part of institutionalised traditions nor expected, from building triad snowmen to organising international concert tours. Their accounts have a touch of proud 'civil disobedience', as if they sometimes come to a point where no matter what unwritten rules say, as teachers, they will do whatever it takes to "bring the students to life". This implies taking students to contexts where there is a chance to understand "what music is all about", and making sure activities are adapted to the student's age, development and life situation. Given that national curricula largely grant music school teachers the freedom to realise teaching and learning according to their own best judgment, it may even seem surprising that the participants feel concern about ignoring tacit norms or the "strange feeling" of social control. One explanation is that the previous, stricter system is still more or less upheld in many schools. Another may be the loneliness the participants describe, consistent with the observation by Day and Sachs (2004) that "most teachers still work in isolation from their colleagues most of the time" (p. 10) or the tradition to protect the privacy of the classroom which also protects the teachers from external judgment of their work and personalities (McIntyre, 2008, p. 5). During the work in the small project group, several teachers make comments to the effect that 'others have been thinking the same thing, so maybe what I am doing is not so odd after all'.

The ways in which the teachers attempt to create conditions in which good relationships to music can be born might be described through a musical metaphor: as a dynamic task of arranging, mixing and weaving, making sure that the most helpful voices have sufficient impact. Critical voices in outer and inner conversation can be balanced with encouraging and warm voices. The sound of a student's violin can be placed in a context where its qualities are appreciated. Difficult life situations can be accompanied by supportive musical 'counterpoint' which take the student's thoughts off his or her worries for a while. However, the teacher must be able to hear what is going on in the entire and sometimes dense 'musical texture' in order to know 'who is talking to whom' and how to introduce countervoices as needed. For example, Teacher 3 is aware that bullying can occur in his violin students' primary school, and has taken action to prevent the students from being humiliated. Teacher 1 has noticed that peer envy can be a problem, and arranges exams and concerts in ways that reduce exposure to sneering comments and, at the same time, allow her students to receive response that gives positive meaning to their playing. Similarly, the teachers develop their own ways of 'tuning out' unhelpful pressure and discouraging response in order to "do what they have to do", which

is often related to an emphasis on enjoyment, patience, long-term perspectives on music teaching and learning, and the internal goods of musical practices.

Understanding how students might experience goodness in relation to music, then, implies understanding of the mixed, complex and dense character of ‘goodness’, as described by Raz (2003) in his account of good judgment about specific value. Exercising judgment on such matters, according to Raz, requires “knowledge of the various values that combine in their mix, and of the way their presence affects the value of the object given the presence of other values” (Raz, 2003, p. 49). The uniqueness of combinations also points to relative fragility: absence of what Teacher 5 calls “key persons” can matter deeply, and even the strongest enthusiasm of one excellent but isolated teacher cannot compensate for unreasonable sacrifice of time spent with friends, or lack of social contexts in which music can be practised and appreciated together with important others. For the teachers, active practice development requires sensitivity to the variety of values and goods under scrutiny, and the strength to consider both internal and external critique while remaining faithful to what they believe is meaningful.

5.7 Learning from collaborative inquiry

Teacher 4: Human contact is always preferable.

As discussed in 1.1 and 2.5, there have been calls for increased peer mentoring and a stronger culture of collaboration in previous studies from the context of Finnish music schools (e.g. Tiainen et al, 2012, pp. 80, 104). With regard to teachers’ ability to create conditions in which good relationships to music can be born, Kurkela recommends that “matters are talked over together and examined together” (personal communication, November 14, 2012). This section of the chapter will focus on data that highlight experiences of collaborative inquiry accumulated during the research project. The purpose here is to report on the aspects of the project the music school teachers found valuable for their practice development, and the reasons for their appreciation.

The overall response from the participants was positive, particularly with regard to the possibility of forming a group of trusted peers in which practices could be openly discussed, as expressed in follow-up interviews:

Teacher 2: The group was good. Our collaboration was good, we pushed each other, and that felt great. You could be yourself, say what you were thinking, and have response. I don’t mean only positive response, I mean that we could advance our ideas freely and have something back. Discussions like that should be much more frequent in our professional lives. We did some terrific teamwork, even though everyone’s expertise was partly different.

Teacher 1: I think all of us in the group liked it a lot. We became a team.

Teacher 5: It was fantastic to get together. I enjoyed that we discussed so much, and that we got to know each other.

Teacher 4: It was unforgettable, very rewarding.

Participants shared experiences and ideas, learned from each other, and offered both moral, practical and technical support for each other's inquiries and new ways of working, even when experimenting involved the risk of surprise, failure, or exposure to negative response from students or colleagues.

Teacher 1: It was more enriching that I would have thought at first, because we had the opportunity to talk about problems that we share and get ideas and help from each other. It was quite amazing that there could be so many ideas in such a small group.

Teacher 3: Everyone had good ideas, I really learned a lot.

Teacher 2: There was a bit of psychology about it, too. You got strength from the group.

Peer support could moderate self-criticism and external pressure sufficiently for the teachers to submit, discuss and try out their ideas. On several occasions, participants said that they welcomed the opportunity of having others witness what they were planning and doing, as a contrast to their everyday work which was experienced as more lonely.

Teacher 5 [to Teacher 4]: I really admire you. You have been thinking about the real thing, which is getting what music is about and transmitting interest in music to the children.

Teacher 1: Sometimes, in music schools, nothing happens even if teachers suggest a lot of things, and in the end, they learn that there is no point coming with suggestions.

Teacher 4 [in follow-up interview]: I must say that the discussions were extremely valuable. Of course, I gained courage and authority for my own project, but the other participants' projects provided so many new perspectives as well.

New ideas and questions emerged both during group discussions and data generation. Several of the teachers reported new insights about their students, even when they had known the students for years.

Teacher 1: As I interviewed them, I came up with new questions. [The students] experienced my questions differently, depending on who answered. You notice how different people are. They don't experience the world in the same way.

CB: It's the same question, and yet, it's not.

Teacher 1: Yes, and the answers were sometimes not at all what I had expected. So I thought, "Oh! Is that how things are these days?" I was very surprised.

The teachers highlighted the dangers of routine and appreciated the opportunity to find new inspiration in the group.

Teacher 5: I find it worrying that I have almost stopped reflecting. You just do your thing, like many others, probably. Am I the only one here who just keeps going? Or are all of you really innovative?

Teacher 2: No! [laughs in the group]

CB: Well, one interpretation might be that what you are doing works.

Teacher 2: What I am afraid of is losing my creativity. Time is so limited, you spend many hours on the road, you have a family, and you are busy all the time. Sometimes it feels like there is nowhere to get inspiration. That's why I think it's great to have

this time for us, a place where we can replace worn material and recharge our batteries.

Feeling worn out and uninspired, the teachers said, might have negative influences on several dimensions of their work, including the capacity to relate ethically to students.

Teacher 4: I think people who end up being bad teachers are the ones who close their ears to anything that is not related to their subject. They miss the most basic thing, which is that you learn from everything, all the time. It's extremely important to stay interested in a variety of things. You never know where you will get your ideas.

Teacher 2: I don't want to become one of those teachers who will come to class, open the window, get out the music book, and go 'Ok, what page were we on?' You need to see each student as an individual, and that can be tiring. I love working and I enjoy having a lot to do. It's the mindwork that sometimes gets me. That you...that you have so many thoughts.

Thinking together and finding new perspectives was seen as helpful, "even the simple fact that we meet" (Teacher 5). The participants were unanimous in stating that talking in a group of peers from different schools was easier than having the same conversations at their workplace, where there might be a tendency to "slip back" into old habits.

Teacher 4: In your own school, you have a certain function. You know who is going to say what, so you are locked, in a way. But here, we are from different places, so we aren't stuck. We can be curious and interested in each other's work, receive information in another way, and discuss more openly.

Teacher 1: You are saying...you are pressing the exact right button here. That's exactly how it is. The music school works in a certain way, according to a certain model, and changing anything in that system is very hard. That's why this is good. It's another forum.

Part of the difficulty, according to the participants, was that administrative structures in music schools were not designed on the premise that teachers would want to discuss teaching and learning on a regular basis. Meetings were mainly spent on planning and practical information, and main parts of staff communication were handled over email. However, at the time of the project, colleagues from different schools were making plans to collaborate.

Teacher 1: Sitting at computers takes too much time. All of us sit there tapping away at our keyboards, reading lots of protocols and papers, but at work, we don't get to talk with each other. There is a real danger that we lose contact with each other. I end up focusing on my own things, arranging concerts of my own.

Teacher 3: We are used to just listening at [music school] meetings. These group sessions are something else. We are at the heart of the matter, and we can discuss and unpack things.

Teacher 1: What we should be discussing in our meetings is music education, maybe how to cooperate [around particular themes], and how to build up the school together.

Teacher 2: At the very least, those who teach the same subject should get together regularly for pedagogical updates.

Teacher 4: So many things have changed now in music schools. Everything, from legislation to curricula. So it's as if nobody really knows where we are going. But now I have heard that a group of theory teachers is planning to get together, and a group of string players, too.

Teacher 2: I have my group of singing teachers who stay in touch and meet every now and then.

On the other hand, several teachers said that their new ideas were well received in their schools, if noted at all:

Teacher 5: It's great at my job, because I am free to do whatever I want. I don't know if the others think I'm strange, or if they just think, 'Oh well, let her do whatever it is that she is doing'. But they are very lively and cheerful.

Teacher 2: Well, that spreads. I mean, it's contagious, if you laugh and have a good time. A funereal [gloomy] atmosphere [can spread as well].

With respect to teacher inquiry during the project, participants noted that participating on a voluntary basis had probably been beneficial.

Teacher 3: It's like an orchestra. It's very important that everyone actually wants to be there.

Teacher 4: Not all teachers want to take part in projects like this. So maybe those who are particularly interested should be given more opportunities to really reflect actively and dig deep [into the issues] as we have done, and then [present the results to others]. If you start by saying that everyone has to participate and everyone has to produce some research of their own, that may end in...nobody doing anything at all.

Teacher 3: Time is always a problem. If teachers are expected to do something at home, or write something, it's best to discuss with the employer and make sure there is funding so they can take time off to do it.

Although articles and book chapters related to music school teaching and learning were presented and shared, the discussions in the group were experienced as the most helpful part of the project.

Teacher 4: If there are articles to read, they need to be followed up. It was easy to just glance through the texts, but you didn't get so much out of it. On the contrary, what was [worthwhile]...let's say...human contact is always preferable.

Teacher 5: I do read, but I am a practical person. If I get an idea, I'll have to find others who think it's good, too. I'll have to make my enthusiasm rub off on others.

Understanding other teachers' practices, the reasons behind their working methods, and the consequences of their choices, was more inspirational and convincing for the participants than hearing or reading about external research. During the last session, the teachers spontaneously presented concrete examples of changing practices on the basis of learning during the project.

Teacher 3: [Teacher 5] has influenced me quite a lot. I have learned that being a teenage girl can be really difficult. So now, when I teach [female students], I give them repertoire that they can play together with others. I have two eleven-year-olds and two fifteen-year-olds who are close friends from before. When they play their violin parts, the younger one shares a music stand with the older one. But during the breaks, they are two and two [with the friend of the same age].

CB: So that actually combines two ideas: crossing age boundaries, and making sure friends get to play together?

Teacher 3: Yes. And [Teacher 1] talked about makeup and all of that...so now, I have [help with that], both with my students and in my orchestra.

Teacher 1: You know, it's important. "What should we wear, what colour, what shoes?" You get some sort of mental preparation done that way.

Teacher 3: And we have started to take photos before the concert.

Teacher 1: Yes! That is important, too.

Teacher 3: So I have had much better attendance than last autumn...so, thank you! [laughs]

The idea of connecting friends within the music school had been "contagious", according to Teacher 5:

Teacher 5: I asked around, "Who would you like to make music with?" And then I started with that. Not combining lots of people who don't know each other, which will only make them feel shy and out of place. But [building on the friendship first] and then finding parts for everyone to play. We are doing American fiddle music at the moment, and our first concert is on Thursday. It's great fun. You have brought me to the Wild West, to my true identity [laughs in the group]. I have found such a lot of inspiration together with you.

Other ideas were referred to as important insights, even if they had not as yet found practical application:

Teacher 4: The question about boys is really important. I have experienced that they get trampled on. It really clicked when you [Teacher 3] said: At a certain age, the girls overpower them completely.

Teacher 2: I haven't used my [videos at conferences] yet, but it's at the back of my mind, I want to show this to others.

Three of the participants wished to express in more detail what the project had meant for them as teachers. These narratives were shared in a follow-up interview (Teacher 2), in an email message (Teacher 4), and during the last group session (Teacher 5), and are worth citing at some length.

Teacher 2: Since we started this project, I have searched more for what I really want to do, so I have also matured as a singer. I see things differently and take them more seriously. Being a model [for the students], I have to follow up what happens, I feel that I have a responsibility. I don't want to teach just in order to teach; I want something good to come out of it. The project has helped me in that respect, and now I can see where I am going. As a teacher, you have to think about what it is you are doing, *why* are you doing this, what is it supposed to give? It's not so much about *me*; it's about the work, and the results we get. That's what's important. Singing as a whole. Last week, I gave a concert, and [in spite of being exhausted], I felt relaxed and in touch with the audience. So I thought, that is surely something that has come out of this, too. Finding yourself, and moving forward from there.

Teacher 4 evaluated several aspects of the project:

Teacher 4: Meeting other teachers in a smaller group was rewarding. We could compare our experiences and I observed that problems are quite similar everywhere; we are concerned with growing children and their parents. We listened to each other and had no need of advancing our own opinions as the only right ones.

The scientific texts and materials were interesting. Many times I found myself thinking, 'Right, that's what I have thought'. Apparently, I apply some 'common sense' in my daily teaching situations, and usually, research seems to catch up with things like that, with time. Several things that I have experienced as important were confirmed.

Talking about how important it is that teachers evaluate and develop their work was a significant boost for me. I took it as direct approval to keep searching for new ways of working. The student is at the centre and I need to find ways of getting the knowledge to reach everyone in suitably challenging ways, so that the interest is maintained. During my own education, it was considered important to present facts, make a strict plan for each lesson, and provide clear exercises. There was probably more of a striving for conservation and consolidation than a concern for developing our thinking. Now I don't feel obliged to apologise if I try new approaches or change the strategy I had planned in the middle of a lesson because I can see that the students don't follow, are tired, or have their minds on something serious that has happened at school.

My own small-scale inquiry was helpful. The group gave me the courage to ask students [about the class] and expose myself to the answers which were both surprising and expected. Without the support from the group, I would not have dared to put the questions the way I did, and the answers would probably have been less interesting. In the future, I will most likely make similar inquiries to stay up to date with what students think.

Finally, Teacher 5 wished to make her feedback personal, directed to each of the participants and to the researcher:

Teacher 5: I would like to talk about how all of you have changed my life as a violin teacher [laughs in the group]. It has been so enriching to listen to [Teacher 1] who has such passion for her music, and to get to listen to the music, and hear you talk about it. It's so immensely important to find one's passion in music. I have started to search for it more.

And then, my great admiration for [Teacher 2], who works with crossover and has widened her knowledge...I have realised that I need to widen what I'm doing, I can't just walk around like a violin teaching robot. There are so many enjoyable things you can engage in. In our last staff meeting yesterday, I talked to [a colleague] and we decided to find something fun to do together, start mixing pop with classical music more than before. We have been living completely separate lives.

And [Teacher 4], it's so great how you don't do at all what we are expected to do! That's fantastic. It's so easy to get stuck in one's box. And there are many other ways [of working] which are much better and much more enjoyable, and you might also find things in your own box that were quite good after all. But it's about daring to do something completely different.

And [Teacher 3] who adapts, who wants to make sure that the boys have fun. You have thought of what is good for this target group. Not like me, I have just taken all the students and made them do the same thing, because this is how the violin is

taught. Instead, you look at them: what kind of students are they, and what would be enriching for them? So I have started to see the difference between students more clearly. And that you can bring them together, the ones that fit together, not just because they have passed the same grade. Embarrassingly enough, I would probably not have thought of that.

And [the researcher], who keeps a low profile and listens to each of us as individuals. I have tried to adopt that and listen more to each of the students in a more personal way. They are a bit afraid of me, and when I ask them what they want to play, it's almost frightening for them. I need to take my own energy level down and make sure the other person gets some space.

For me, this has been a period of self-examination. In another situation I might have become depressed, but now I am inspired instead, thanks to all of you. Somehow, I have had a fresh start.

Overall, what was appreciated was the possibility for each of the participants “to construct our thing in our own way” (Teacher 2) with support from the group. There was a sense of surprise at the existing and emerging resourcefulness: “I don't think directors are aware of how much capacity there is among teachers” (Teacher 1). The possibility of collaborative practice development was singled out as important during the project and missing in everyday work. According to Teacher 2, “the problem today is that we all have such big egos. It's just *me*, there is no *we* anymore”. In terms close to phronesis and to a MacIntyrean view of practice as cooperative activity which results in extended powers to achieve excellence, Teacher 3 expressed what he had appreciated most: “The best thing was that we really talked about practice. And everyone has experience, and everyone is wise”.

6. Conclusions, discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the aspirations and challenges that emerge when Finnish music school teachers engage in collaborative reflection and inquiry about practice development, especially with regard to the curricular ideal of promoting good relationships to music. In chapter 5, I have provided analyses from each teacher's perspective, an overview and analysis of shared themes, and a presentation of aspects of collaborative inquiry that the teachers who participated in the research project found valuable. In this final chapter, I will summarise the results of metaanalysis, consider each of the research questions in turn, and argue further for 'mixing' and 'weaving' as metaphors for describing the complexity of 'goodness' and development in music school teacher practices (6.1). I will then come back to two main theoretical ideas that have been highlighted in the study: the concept of 'a practice' and the notion of 'a good relationship to music'. These ideas are discussed in the light of insights generated in the study and possible implications of those insights. I will also have a few more general points to make about the potential and challenges of teaching and learning in music schools (6.2). Then, advantages and limitations of the methods used in the study are discussed (6.3). Finally, I summarise the contributions of the study (6.4) and provide suggestions for further research (6.5).

6.1 Aspiration and challenge in music school practices

The results of the study suggest that what music school teachers wish to accomplish in and through practice development can be understood through two interconnected dimensions of aspiration:

- **Creating conditions for good musical practice, where 'good' receives its meaning in context**
- **Creating conditions for inspiration and vitality**

These two dimensions can be seen as sustaining each other and forming a 'good circle', both in teachers' daily work and in their hopes for how students might develop. The teachers' aspirations are understood in this study as strivings to reinforce the connection between musical practices and various forms of human flourishing such that music and flourishing can sustain each other. Musical and educational goods that teachers wish to secure both for their students and for themselves are further divided below into aims of (a) developing specific skills and gaining experience in the chosen area of musical competence, (b) developing related abilities which facilitate access to practices, (c) cultivating personal qualities and dispositions which, the teachers believe, increase the chances of living well, and (d) creating conditions for experiences of inspiration and vitality. Inspiration is described as a state that can drive a person forward, contribute to imagination and resilience, and enable strong experiences of joy. Vitality involves "sharpness" but it also has a prominent physical aspect,

included in accounts of children being allowed to run and be playful during lessons, of students being encouraged to move along with the music, and of aspiring towards feelings of being strongly alive.¹⁴³

Challenges and restrictions emerge in the form of institutional routines, internalised but unhelpful rules from previous collective practice, rival demands, and overt or perhaps imagined contempt for the aims that teachers believe are important. Teachers sometimes describe the solutions they develop as unconventional and their accounts provide many examples of imagination and inventiveness. However, a closer analysis also suggests that some of the solutions have their roots in practices which have long traditions but are not always possible to realise within the current music school framework. In difficult situations, collaborative reflection and inquiry can offer the support teachers may need in order to resist constraints and be able to effect and sustain change.¹⁴⁴

Research question 1, first part (a): What aspirations (with regard to students' development) are important to the music school teachers in the study?

a) To help students develop specific skills and gain experience in their area of competence

Different skills are naturally emphasised for different practices: solid bowing technique for violinists, healthy voice production for singers, knowledge about a variety of sounds for students who will create their own music. The common purposes, however, are to secure access to participation and to help students form and extend understandings about what matters in diverse musical practices, “what the music is really about”. Goods in this category range from the ability to produce certain musical sounds and complex rhythms to understandings which enable nonverbal sharing, feeling touched by music, making music “one’s own”, and having access to music as a mode of expression.

b) To help students develop related abilities which facilitate access to musical practices

Abilities that do not directly define specific musical practices but facilitate access to them include understanding of social skills and codes of conduct which are characteristic of each musical context, whether it is a community orchestra or a group of nine-year-old violinists. These abilities are partly practical; for example, being able to handle instruments and other artefacts. But they also involve relating well to others, being helpful, supportive and encouraging, and

¹⁴³ The term *inspiration* is widely used in a variety of human sciences; for a review based on psychology literature, see Thrash and Elliot (2003). However, the term is notoriously hard to define, let alone operationalise, and the trait or state of inspiration is underresearched from a crossdisciplinary point of view (Oleynick, Thrash, LeFew, Molovan, & Kieffaber, 2014, p. 1).

¹⁴⁴ See Osborn, McNess, Broadfoot, Pollard, & Triggs (2000).

contributing a sense of playfulness and humour to counter the strain and effort included in the work. Adapting to groups is not always a priority: for students who are in the process of finding their musical interests and modes of expression, developing an independent mind is also seen as important.

c) To help students cultivate personal qualities and dispositions which, the teachers believe, increase the chances of human flourishing

The goods in this category include vitality, striving for health, alertness, “sharpness”, focus, perseverance, resilience, curiosity, humour, openness, self-knowledge, self-expression, outspokenness, initiative, care for others, and an appropriate mix of honesty, humility and confidence. Cultivating these qualities, according to the teachers, can create a good loop where students have the energy to engage in musical practices in which both musical skills and the mentioned personal qualities are supported further.

d) To find contexts in which students can experience states of inspiration and vitality

Music can contribute to feelings of joy, inspiration, “being on fire”, and being strongly alive, but explanations and institutional routines will not necessarily go very far in promoting understanding of this dimension. Students need to experience these states for themselves, and the teachers try to find or create contexts in which such experiences can occur. The key aim is that students find something in music that they care about, can make their own, and are able to embody.

Research question 1, first part (b): What aspirations (with regard to their own practice development) are important to the music school teachers in the study?

a) To continue developing skills and gain more experience in their area of competence

The teachers describe strivings for versatile knowledge of genres and versatile skills (for example, conducting), but within realistic limits – not everyone can become an expert at everything, but there is always something new to learn. Knowledge of repertoire and styles is considered important, particularly in order to widen the musical options available to students. Understanding children’s musical and emotional development and understanding students as individuals is often described as a matter of cumulating teacher experience, but several of the participants also call for integration of more theoretical knowledge and interdisciplinary cooperation in their work.

b) To develop abilities which are helpful for teaching

The abilities in this category are connected with “energy levels”, sensitivity and timing: knowing when to push and when to back out, listening closely to what the students express both musically and as persons, adjusting to the situation, and keeping a long-term perspective in mind. These ways of acting require understanding of how the notions of ‘goodness’ or ‘excellence’ acquire their

meaning in the contexts of different musical practices and different human lives: virtuoso performances in the life of a professional violinist; being able to focus for increasing periods of time in the life of a young violin student.

c) To cultivate personal qualities and dispositions that characterise 'good teachers' as understood by the participants

Some of the personal qualities and dispositions cultivated by the teachers are the same as those encouraged in students: humour, honesty, openness, care, and the humility to keep learning. In addition, there is mention of patience, poise, body awareness, imagination, and a certain playfulness which allows the teachers to create learning environments that suit children. Staying “physically and psychologically healthy” is considered important, not least because the teachers understand themselves as potential role models for their students.

d) To remain inspired and vital

The participants in the study refer repeatedly to the dangers of fatigue, boredom, demoralisation and alienation. Teachers “do what they have to do” in order to avoid feeling “dead” or “half dead”. Subjectively experienced states of vitality and inspiration are important not just to students, but also to teachers, who need projects, contacts and encouragement to preserve their own liveliness. “You have got to have something”, one teacher says. For her, that “something” is “a mad vision”: an aim that may seem nearly impossible at first, but changes one’s outlook on life during the course of its realisation.

Research question 1, second part: How can these aims be related to larger debates about values and goods in music education?

The teachers’ overall aims can be understood as aspirations to create ‘good circles’ where musical practice is connected with human vitality and inspiration. Through this link between activity and human flourishing, the classical notions of practice (*praxis*) and phronesis turned out to be relevant to the study in deeper ways than expected. Teachers’ aims and challenges can be fruitfully interpreted as a search for goodness which goes beyond dichotomies such as intrinsic/extrinsic, musical/extramusical, individual/social, or excellence/enjoyment. The need for making either-or choices dissolves as teachers and students advance together step by step towards aims that emerge only gradually. For example, according to Teacher 1, “a child does not know what his or her goal is”, but only knows that he or she is interested in music. The teachers orient their students in practices and take the lead for a while, but emphasise the balance between exercising their musical expert knowledge and working from an understanding of their young students as a learners and as growing persons. “What works”, Teacher 3 states, is “a newborn thing” where some general principles are at work but other characteristics cannot be predicted. Although the teachers consider how factors such as gender, social background, or religious affiliation may impact a student’s music school trajectory, they discuss solutions in terms of specific and relational situations.

Similarly to parents in the music school study by Lilledahl and Georgii-Hemming (2009), the teachers hope that their students might find “their thing”. ‘Finding’, clearly, is not the same thing as being force-fed. It is also not being left to an imagined ‘neutral’ situation where students have no musical backgrounds and teachers are expected to appear impersonal and detached in relation to their own experiences and preferences. In particular, opposing tradition and child-centredness makes little sense as teachers help their students to develop solid technical skill, assist them in negotiating rules for long-term cooperation in student-led groups, search for inspiring repertoire together with the students, or introduce them to intergenerational community music. At the risk of stating the obvious, practices involve salient goods, activities, learning and relationships that support and inspire students and open new possibilities which children and young people could not find in isolation from more experienced practitioners.

Unless one categorically believes that teaching and learning music from other time periods than the present is old-fashioned by default, charges of conventionalism seem unfounded given the teachers’ inventiveness and engagement in improving practices. Further, describing the tension between tradition-centred and child-centred approaches to teaching as antagonism between genres (for example, classical versus popular music or ‘folk music’ versus ‘art music’), although partly relevant, also emerges as a serious oversimplification. Instead, the stories told in the empirical part of this study support Green’s (1988) concept of “delineated meanings” and Bowman’s (2005c) similar statement that “music’s power itself always depends on how, by whom, for whom, and under what circumstances we engage in the process of musicking and teaching” (p. 126). These circumstances, I argue, also include teachers’ knowledge and their own enthusiasm for music, regardless of genre and whether the enthusiasm has been born out of understanding music’s value as intrinsic, consensus-based, personal, a combination of those, or something else (see 2.2). Accepting and embracing a large range of musical meanings (Alperson, 2010b, p. 191) opens possibilities for both students and teachers to understand what others have found worthwhile, and what they themselves might eventually find worthwhile and sustaining in different situations and at different times in their own lives.

So far, I have reported on what was present when music school teachers engaged in reflection and inquiry about how to develop their practices. Some examples of what seemed absent during the project are also in order. Explicitly nationalistic and patriotic aims were not mentioned in the discussions, which is noteworthy given the historical strong ambitions that music schools were to reflect and represent national art, values, and identity (Broman-Kananen, 2005, pp. 40–41; Heimonen & Hebert, 2012). One comment that might be considered part of such debates was the question by Teacher 2 on whether “a new tradition of Finnish singing” is in the making. Processes of globalisation of musical practices were foremostly discussed as pressure from corporate music business; travelling and

cultural exchange, on the other hand, were referred to as more or less self-evident parts of musicianship. Local concerns for student development and well-being and the practical and social arrangements related to such concerns consistently emerged as more important than global tendencies. Digital media were discussed briefly and mentioned partly as resources (for example, the potential of YouTube to enlarge students' musical knowledge and experiences) and partly as threats representing corporate interests. The participants' work as understood through the stories in this project is largely secularised and religious groundings for musical practice were mostly discussed as something that needed to be taken into account when it mattered to students, parents or colleagues. Finally, aims that would belong in MacIntyre's category of "external" goods or "goods of effectiveness", such as financial reward or prestige, were not foregrounded by participants, except as means to resist pressure (e.g. being able to demonstrate impressive technical skill in order to counter charges of amateurism in folk music).

Research question 2: How do the music school teachers describe the solutions they develop in response to challenges in their practice, especially with regard to the aim of creating conditions for good relationships to music?

The challenges teachers describe can be organised in four broad categories: (a) handling societal pressure, (b) handling institutional pressure, (c) avoiding potential harms associated with their practices, and (d) adapting to different students and situations. Creating conditions in which good relationships to music can be born involves continuous acts of interpretation. It is partly a matter of dealing with pressure and other problems that might otherwise take focus and time off learning and music-making. It is also a matter of caring about the student as a person. Finally, and importantly, it implies steady efforts to contribute to and protect the continuity of contexts which are helpful for the students' musical learning.

Solutions involve

- warding off external stereotyping ('only girls play the violin', 'folk musicians wear uncool clothes'), covert or open contempt from insiders and outsiders to the musical practice, envy, bullying, and "nonsense" ('no skills are required for singing')
- resisting unhelpful institutional frames, routine, external pressure, and premature demands on effectiveness and visible results
- identifying and avoiding potential harms related to musical and music school practices (for example, arrogance between students; damaging ways of using the voice) and potential unreasonable compromises for the sake of music studies (for example, students having to renounce important aspects of their lives as lived in childhood)
- taking interest in students' backgrounds, personalities, life events, and long-term physical and psychological health

- supporting relationships, communities, and contexts in which students are appreciated as music-makers and persons
- guiding students to communities and contexts where they can experience and learn relevant skills, personal qualities, and reasons for making music
- promoting the goods of groups in which musical learning takes place (trust, a psychologically safe atmosphere, “something of their own”)
- promoting the emergence of wide, positive concepts of music

In addition, the teachers describe reflection and work on the personal qualities they aspire to develop in themselves (see results for research question 1). ‘Virtue’ as a term is never mentioned in the group; its Swedish equivalent *dygd* is rarely used in everyday language except jokingly as an anachronism. Still, the MacIntyrean definition, which is central to his practice concept, seems quite accurate as an illustration of what teachers strive for and also hope that their students might develop: virtues, he writes, are acquired qualities “the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any of those goods” (MacIntyre, 1981/2007, p. 191). On the basis of this interpretation, I would also like to make the case that reliable personal qualities and dispositions in teachers, such as being encouraging and patient, should be regarded as parts of the ‘conditions’ in which good relationships to music can be born and sustained.

Related to the challenge of external pressure, teachers describe contending values which sometimes influence their work. Detailed accounts of such instances have been provided earlier in the text. At this point, I will propose an overarching interpretation in the form of a metaphor: there seem to be sets of *shadow demands* which are felt even though they are not always talked about. There is not enough support in the empirical data to form a good understanding of where the shadow demands come from. Sometimes, they are referred to as “Russian-Finnish”¹⁴⁵ or puritan traditions; sometimes they are only depicted as how things “used to be”, or as what “market forces” ask of teachers.

The sets of shadow demands include near-caricatural presuppositions about teaching and learning, students, and teachers. Regardless of their origin, many of the presuppositions share the characteristic of shunning the personal and the emotional. Teaching and learning imply systematic, effective transmission of particular skills and should be approached with seriousness and grit (‘this is not supposed to be fun’). Nothing ‘extra’ or playful is necessary and emotions

¹⁴⁵ A government committee report from the mid-1970s and personal communications cited by Heimonen (2002) suggest that early on, teaching methods in Finnish music schools were influenced by the systematic musical training from early childhood as organised in the former Soviet Union and in Hungary (pp. 157–158, see also p. 213).

unrelated to the music which is studied are irrelevant. The living, moving, developing human body is pushed into the background.¹⁴⁶ Life events are not assumed to influence the process. Students are expected to be more or less similar ('one size fits all'), their personal backgrounds should not be considered, and casual public ranking of students according to ability is customary. Teachers are expected to be able to dissociate from personal attachment to specific musics, avoid insisting too much on their knowledge of particular practice values, and avoid participating in music-making during lessons, since students are in focus. Teachers should also be independent and know how to act without discussing with others. Human relationships are not supposed to matter to teaching and learning music; any teacher should be able to teach any student and any student should be able to cooperate with any other student at any time and stage of their lives. 'The system' is more present than the humans involved in it. Importantly, the shadow demands are not described as directly related to the administrative culture at any of the music schools in which the participants work. Instead, they are described as a form of anonymous and tacit social control, "a strange feeling" of being watched (Teacher 1).

Although the participants are unanimous in their critique of these demands, they still sometimes show hesitation in breaking the unwritten rules. However, when they do defy the shadow demands and bring about the "crazy" things they think are necessary for teaching and learning music, their solutions often go back to what musical and educational practices have long been thought to require: social and historical contexts, personal relations, care and affection for practitioners and for the practice itself, enthusiasm, imagination, and long-term aims. "Madness" also signifies something that breaks the routine; something that was not there before and seemed impossible. What keeps the teachers from accepting shadow demands is their own quest for skill and vitality, and their own experiences as learners together with teachers who have been helpful and whom they have trusted for that very reason. It is noteworthy, and it was one of the surprises of the study, that the concept 'a good relationship to music' is used rarely in the group conversations. However, this does not imply that the idea as such is irrelevant for music school teachers. On the contrary, as illustrated in various ways in the stories above, the teachers' aspirations for good practice and human vitality show deep affinities with Kurkela's (1997) core idea that musical progress has occurred when the person's relationship to music has become better at providing support for the good life. In this sense, good musical practice can be (co-)constitutive of a good life and at the same time have mimetic capacities: the variety of goodness in music can represent, or point to, varieties of good lives.

¹⁴⁶ This seems particularly worrying in relation to previous studies which suggest that neglected ergonomics can explain frequent musculoskeletal problems in music school teachers and students (Fjellman-Wiklund & Sundelin, 1999; Kaladjev, 2000; Wahlström Edling & Fjellman-Sundelin, 2009).

Research question 3: What aspects of collaborative reflection and inquiry, if any, do music school teachers find valuable for their practice development?

A detailed account of what the teachers found helpful during the project and of the learning and development that resulted has already been presented in 5.7. As a way of countering the ‘shadow demands’ described above, one aspect that was particularly appreciated was the possibility of discussing practice in what one teacher called “another forum” than usually. Working methods in music schools can turn into rigid routines, but so can meetings and discussions: individual teachers become actors in a metaphorical play where their roles, lines and actions are predictable and difficult to change. The seemingly banal solution of doing development work with other colleagues than those who were part of the same systemic routine turned out to be more important than initially expected by researcher and participants. However, beneficial outcomes, the teachers said, depended on trust and openness in the group, and a willingness from each participant to share detailed accounts of teaching and learning.

In order to point to some of the possible implications of the results, I will use a somewhat reformulated version of the research question:

In what situations can music school teachers benefit from collaborative and/or interdisciplinary development of their practices?

a) When teachers want to introduce new ways of working with their students

In new situations, or when teachers have developed innovative ideas and are about to try them out in practice, they can be vulnerable to overt or imagined critique, contempt or questioning of their ways of working, especially if they lack subject colleagues. Honest, benevolent feedback from peers (‘critical friends’) can provide moral support, a forum for improving ideas, and a possibility for others to learn. Similarly, allowing student voice to inform practice development can be helpful but also involves an element of teacher vulnerability. Here, peer support may increase teachers’ willingness to hear what students have to say. A university partnership may also provide research-informed validation and discussion of approaches to teaching and learning. Facilitating nonjudgmental, reflective conversation about practices can help overcome what Stenhouse (1975, p. 159) identified as the main obstacles to teachers studying their work in order to improve it: psychological and social barriers.

b) When teachers need to handle situations which require particular knowledge or deliberation

As noted in previous research on music schools, besides parents, music school teachers are sometimes the only adults that children have known for a long time and trust enough to share what is going on in their lives (see above, pp. 21–22). In addition, long-term weekly contact may allow teachers to notice signs of distress in their students. While no such concrete ongoing situations were discussed during this project, several teachers called for opportunities to

collaborate with psychologists or other professionals as needed. For example, one participant noted that developmental psychology had not been included at all in her teacher education. In addition, another teacher stated frankly that she believed that she altogether lacked the knowledge which would allow her to take gender or LGBTQ issues into account in her work. It seems likely that interdisciplinary work or tailored support might relieve the teachers of at least part of what one participant calls “the mindwork” that “gets her”, and improve the chances that their interactions with students are as helpful and appropriate as possible. Such work becomes particularly important in dropout scenarios, which may involve more complex reasons than the generic ‘loss of interest’.¹⁴⁷

Situations do not necessarily need to be unfamiliar or particularly complicated in order to warrant deliberation. Collaborative inquiry can help teachers to adapt general principles to particular cases, as when one participant used the idea of learning in friendly intergenerational settings to improve organisation in a small group of students of different ages. Discussing pedagogical solutions with a view to ideas of the good life as it is lived in childhood may also prove fruitful, as when another participant found support in the group for developing more playful ways of teaching and learning.

c) When the institutional frameworks and routines of music schools cannot contain musical practices

The study suggests that some practices of teaching and learning music which have long traditions, such as apprenticeship learning in orchestras or long-term and partly informal work in groups, are sometimes difficult to uphold in music schools. Collaborative work where ideas are shared can help teachers to find ways of setting up and sustaining conditions for such practices. Several of the teachers remark that what they consider important and inspiring “lives best outside the music school” and “cannot be locked inside a municipal box”. The extent to which music schools can expand their activities to help develop and contain these practices and/or work together with musicians and groups who uphold them depends on goodwill from administration and from providers of funding.

¹⁴⁷ Froehlich (2007a) discusses the task of teaching students to sing ‘in tune’. “Such a seemingly simple task begins to look quite complex when one considers the many reasons that can cause “out-of-tune-ness” in a child: poor breath control, poor hearing or other specific physical problems, boredom, lack of sleep, regarding singing as “sissy”, or perhaps an inclination to behave contrary to teacher-given instructions.” (p. 13). Teachers can only act as professionals, Froehlich argues, if they have knowledge about all of these and other causes for singing out of tune. Such knowledge requires both teacher experience and familiarity with research. This is a strong argument which puts formidable demands on teachers and strengthens the case for collaborative work.

d) When teachers want to revitalise their practices

Aiming for inspiration, the teachers say, is a long-term commitment and “the waves go up and down” both during a school year and in teacher careers. Without time to discuss with colleagues or opportunities to consult other professionals, development is not always easy. Realising that she needed to change some of the ways in which she worked, one participant said that “she might have become depressed”, but thanks to the work in the group, she was “inspired instead”. A rather down-to-earth conclusion is that what seemed most helpful for the teachers during the project was the possibility to simply sit down for an entire day and talk about their work with the help of a facilitator. Everyday routines do not allow time to discuss “the core of our business”, one participant said; the pedagogical issues that should be most important.

Mixing and weaving

*Socrates: Surely there is greater hope that the object of our search will be clearly present in the well mixed life than in the life which is not well mixed?*¹⁴⁸

As musical metaphors which can help our understanding of how music school teachers develop their practices in search of good relationships to music, I have suggested *mixing* and *weaving*, referring to the process through which composers, musicians and music producers combine, juxtapose, contrast, balance and foreground different elements in a musical whole. On the basis of the stories told in this study, I argue that such processes take place at several levels of teachers’ work, for example when they set up learning situations, choose repertoire, attend to relationships between persons involved in the teaching and learning process, use a memory bank of musical sounds in their work, introduce new ways of working, and reflect on how to best support a particular student. There is considerable inventiveness in how the participants in this study perform the mixing, and interesting work occurs when they bring together persons or elements that would not be connected in routine circumstances (encouraging teenagers to learn together with retired persons in a community orchestra; taking a group of students to see the glaciers in Alaska).

The process of mixing and weaving involves choosing and unchoosing new and old norms embedded in musical practices, but each ‘thread’ (feature, act, artefact, musical sound) is examined carefully: what will this sound which is typical of commercial pop do to beloved folk tunes, how will this singing technique affect the student’s voice as a whole, is wearing traditional costumes necessary for the performance of traditional repertoire? Allowing different traditions to influence and challenge each other is nothing new in music; in this study, the process is visible when (for example) young Finnish violinists play Irish fiddle music using technical skills inherited from Italian and Czech virtuoso traditions and their learning process involves elements from medieval

¹⁴⁸ Plato: *Philebus* (61b). Plato makes Socrates argue that the good life is mixed. (Trans. H. N. Fowler, 1925). Retrieved from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

apprenticeship tradition as well as the social constructivism predominant in Finnish curricular theory of the 21st century.

Psychological mixing and weaving is closely related to the symbolic conversations referred to earlier in the study. Teachers involve their students in contexts where they can experience themselves inside a mix of cultural voices and countervoices. For example, a teenager who will later go clubbing with her friends spends the early part of her Friday night in an intergenerational church orchestra, playing Protestant Baroque music which the members appreciate for different reasons, some religious, some secular. In this context, there is also a mix of listeners to hear and understand the sound of her violin: as the musical expression of a person who is known and appreciated by the members of the orchestra; as the sign of perfectible skill which can be criticised by a knowledgeable audience; and as the result of ongoing development supported by her teacher. Here, the right balance provides both security and challenge.

Concrete conversation also takes place between teachers, students, parents, and other important persons connected with the student's learning and requires similar balancing processes, for example, between what the teacher knows and what the student is able or willing to learn, or between parental ambitions and the student's own desires. While dialogue with students' caregivers has often been recommended, two participants remark that occasionally and for some students, it can more helpful if parents stay in the background. Similarly, the teacher needs to moderate the strength of his or her voice, sometimes even literally.

Knowing how to mix, balance, and to direct the focus of attention emerges in this study as key competences among teachers who are able to emphasise or tone down the impact of different elements during the process of teaching and learning. Teachers perform the balancing through awareness of what Green (1988) refers to as the "webs" of "delineated meanings", by which she means the way in which content, references, connotations and significance in music are related to social contexts, relationships and interaction. In more simple terms, adapted to this study, the mix might be understood as *what persons will connect with music as a result of having been students in a music school*. Interpreted as something that has been woven together over time, these connections form a whole which has a certain 'feel' and can be experienced as agreeable or not, meaningful or not, inspiring or not. In all the teachers' stories, there are references to all the categories of the heuristic map elaborated in 2.3, interconnected in various ways: access to musical experience, expression, appreciation, and active participation; searching for personal happiness and a well-lived life; benefits for individual development, relationships and the larger community; and the possibility of connecting musical experience to central or existential issues in human life. As demonstrated by Teacher 5 in her work with older amateur musicians who were discouraged as music school students, new threads can be added later in life and change the balance and experience of the

whole. Long-term inspiration and vitality may be seen as important criteria for judging how well balancing has succeeded. Knowing what ‘thread’ keeps the web together both in the long run and here and now is also important. For example, as noted by Teacher 5, sufficient technical skill may prove more important than expected; and as noted by the music school director, disintegration of a group of violinist friends threatened to compromise their entire interest in keeping up their lessons.

When teachers succeed in intervening to promote and sustain good relationships to music, they often seem to do so in ways that also promote and sustain overall flourishing for their students: health, friendships, inclusion in a benevolent community, creative freedom, or cultivating personal qualities such as perseverance, curiosity, and humour. In music school education, human, social and cultural practices overlap, for better and for worse. Common to these practices are ongoing contacts between adults and children, and efforts to make these contacts as worthwhile and constructive as possible. What teachers seem to be doing, in and apart from teaching musical skill, is to *point* (explicitly or subtly) towards what they have come to understand as important and helpful; towards rich and personal varieties of ways in which life can be made enjoyable; and towards ways of getting through inevitable difficulties. Musical activity itself points to ‘varieties of goodness’, or as Dissanayake (2013) puts it, “artifies” ways of sustaining life and human vitality.¹⁴⁹

Seen in this way, the parental expectation that music schools might help students “find their thing” (Lilliedahl & Georgii-Hemming, 2009) which will enrich their lives, or as articulated in this study, “inspire them”, can be interpreted as a deep expression of care for children. At the intersection of musical and educational practices, wise deliberation about how to best support a young person’s engagement in this or the other musical practice will tend to involve discussions about how the person’s life is going as a whole. The act or art of weaving together what is needed for a good relationship to music can, in the best of scenarios, have a positive influence on several dimensions of a young person’s life.

This study suggests, then, that music school teachers can make significant positive differences in their students’ lives on the condition that they get teaching and learning processes right. However, inspiration and vitality in and through music education do not occur automatically through routinely chosen repertoire or methods. These states are not given once and for all but consciously strived for, and they require care, attention, courage and imagination. Collaborative inquiry of the kind that was undertaken for the study can serve the double purpose of providing support for teachers and improving their chances of accomplishing what they consider the most important aims of their work.

¹⁴⁹ Here, both moral and nonmoral (e.g. utilitarian, hedonistic, beneficial, “medical”, social and aesthetic) values can be relevant (see above, p. 39).

Interdisciplinary collaboration may improve teachers' capacity for 'judgment under uncertainty', adding pieces of knowledge that influence the whole. Through a consciously, knowingly balanced and alternating process of demand and playfulness, action and reflection, deliberate influence and patient waiting, teachers can help students to find their own ways of committing to varieties of goodness in and through music.

6.2 Music school teaching: Good practices and good relationships

As music schools throughout Europe seem to move towards both a larger diversity of musical practices and increasing openness for different learners and different reasons for undertaking musical study, good understandings of musical practices (and the teaching and learning traditions associated with them) are likely to become even more crucial than they already are. Not only do different practices promote and point to different goods and versions of living a good life. Naqvi (2012) also shows that, accordingly, the conceptual apparatus used to describe or analyse music varies across traditions, and that there are excellent reasons to be on guard against attempts to understand what one tradition and its culture considers important with the help of concepts from another tradition.

In Finland, building a network of music schools which would guarantee equal access to systematic, uniform, high quality music education to educate the country's future professionals may have created the illusion of a monolith. The daily life of teacher practices in music schools, however, tells a different story. Similarly to Löytönen (2004) who collaborated with dancers and dance teachers in her study on the everyday life of Finnish dance institutions, I have found a diverse world with some tensions between the aspirations of practitioners and the requirements of institutions (cf. Löytönen, 2004, pp. 275–276).

I suggest that the interpretation that seems closest to both the contemporary and the historical life of extracurricular music education in Finland is that diversity, in fact, is nothing new. For policy makers in the 1960s, heterogeneity was seen as a problem: unsystematic lessons given by amateurs "out in the province" (Broman-Kananen, 2005, p. 49) gave meagre quality guarantees for development of preprofessional skills as required by the Sibelius Academy. Music schools and their uniform, conservatoire-inspired system of graded exams were expected to install order in this chaos. At the same time, at least three traditions were expected to take the shape of music school teaching: private teaching (often associated, not without contempt, with 'piano ladies' who taught the young females of the bourgeoisie); systematically structured secondary school education; and the apprenticeship tradition in which many orchestra musicians had been trained (Broman-Kananen, 2005). I argue that there is little reason to believe that musical and educational traditions which are culturally and socially meaningful and significant would vanish by themselves inside an institutional framework. Students (regardless of gender and ambition) have kept going to weekly instrumental lessons with a trusted adult and this has been

important in its own right, as illustrated by one participant's example of a student who spent most of an academic year trying to make it through adolescence with the support of an understanding teacher. Orchestra musicians with plenty of performance experience have made sure their students join groups and ensembles where they can accumulate the necessary real-life skills, as several of the teachers in this study describe. And children whose future careers are still completely uncertain have kept learning music within a formal, structured system as long as they have been interested and dropped out when the balance between demands and contribution to their lives has tipped the wrong way.

Even the image of uniform aims represented by music school exams may be a partial illusion. As one of the participants in this study remarked: "You know, there are local differences anyway". As adults who teach growing children, meet them regularly for many years, and get to know them and care for them as persons, music school teachers are perfectly aware that there are many good reasons for being interested in music(s). It would be hard to disapprove of the ideal of equal access to well-organised, systematic music education with professional and reflective teachers. But the aim of standardised effectiveness, singled out by Saari et al (2014) as a strong current educational discourse in Finnish education, seems to sit uncomfortably in music school contexts, even as greenhouses for budding young professionals. Teachers' practical reasoning – unless they resort to stereotypical conceptions of talent and destiny – takes differences, social contexts, and 'varieties of goodness' into account. Furthermore, both as practitioners and as educators in a larger sense, music school teachers cannot be expected to feign neutrality with respect to the goods that they believe are important; for example, the importance of body and emotion in music, or the significance of personal relationships and histories which sustain and co-constitute musical practices.

Overall, it seems wrong to blame individual teachers or the national music school association for failings in a system which was maybe never possible or desirable to make completely uniform in the first place. "Open, flexible teaching structures" have been officially recommended by SML as a "framework for varied, pluralist music education" for at least the last decade (Klemettinen, 2006). What may be needed within growing cultures of openness and diversity are abilities to (a) understand and analyse musical practices and practices of music education and (b) identify and critically examine contempt shown for practices on sweeping charges that they are, for example, 'old-fashioned', 'low art', 'elitist', 'provincial', or something else. Here, the notion of good relationships to music(s) becomes relevant also to music schools as institutions and to society at large, given that the 'ecosystem' of musical practices can become fragile in the absence of institutional and societal affirmation. Frank (2002) points out that mainstream culture exerts remarkable pressure on people to settle for trivial choices and identities, leading to a situation where some groups are openly or subtly persuaded to renounce what matters to them,

including music that they love. This seems to be the case for some of the teachers in this study, and their countermove is to defend not simply their own preferences, but diversity in general. In order to form a relationship to any music, they argue, students first have to be aware that the music exists at all.

MacIntyre's rather particular definition of a practice entered this project through its connection with Alpers's early elaboration of praxialism. Choosing to engage with this definition had certain consequences, such as coming to pay close attention to personal qualities strived for in music teaching and learning. It also affected terminology used in the text. The seasoned MacIntyre reader will recognise references to goods, personal dispositions (virtues), traditions, and narratives.¹⁵⁰ Building instead on practice concepts by Bourdieu, as e.g. Burnard (2012) has done in her book on musical creativities, or by Wenger, as e.g. Partti (2012) did in her research on cosmopolitan digital musicians, might have been possible and would probably have taken the analysis and terminology in different directions.¹⁵¹

It is perhaps a mark of the complexity of MacIntyre's theory that, as many educationalists, I have found his definition helpful against his own opinion and, furthermore, in spite of his apparent lack of experience of contemporary music education (see, for example, the cruel advice on "ruthless exclusion" of "talentless" music students, MacIntyre, 1999, p. 89). In the introduction, I provisionally stated that music school teaching can qualify as a practice on his terms (see above, pp. 6–8). I based this argument on teachers' double involvement in musical and educational practices.¹⁵² At this point, I am less sure of how categorical it is possible to be. For example, whereas a guitar teacher is expected to teach the guitar, a 'music school teacher' can be compelled to teach 'the music school', i.e. the explicit and implicit rules of the institution, rather than to represent a practice. My best answer is that music school teaching may or may not be a practice in the MacIntyrean sense, depending on whether or not teachers periodically engage in deliberations about the goods and aims involved and work towards better and more complete understandings of them. One mark of a mature practitioner, MacIntyre believes, is the capacity for practical reasoning undertaken with peers. "As a practical reasoner, I have to engage in conversation with others, conversations about what it would be best for me or them or us to do here and now, or next week, or next year" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 111). Helpful changes in practices have a narrative quality, according to Conle

¹⁵⁰ Readers unfamiliar with MacIntyre's larger revisionist Aristotelian project may associate his work with persistent but false understandings that he represents some brand of 'conservatism', 'traditionalism', or 'communitarianism'. All of these misconceptions are repeatedly refuted in his texts; see also Knight (2007).

¹⁵¹ Another possibility might have been the theory on "practice architectures" offered by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008).

¹⁵² "It's not clear to me how far we disagree," MacIntyre answers Dunne (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002). "You say that teaching is itself a practice. I say that teachers are involved in a variety of practices and that teaching is an ingredient in every practice" (p. 8).

(1997), and come about “when practitioners are on a quest to find the goods inherent in a practice, as well as in lives and traditions” (p. 216).

On the criterion that a practice needs to involve conversations which contribute to the aims of (1) achieving excellence and (2) systematically extending conceptions of the ends and goods involved in the practice, music school teaching does *not* emerge as a practice in the accounts of participants’ everyday work generated in this study, at least not as seen through the more frustrating aspects brought to the discussion. In her analysis of the long-term development of Finnish music schools, Broman-Kananen (2005) described an individualising shift where teachers question previous traditions and hierarchies and seek their professional identities through personal reflection on teaching routines, “a me-project” (p. 186) which takes place within the confines of each classroom. This study gives some reason to believe that the “socially established cooperative” (MacIntyre, 1981/2007) which characterises a practice is largely missing among music school teachers. As expressed by Teacher 2, “the problem today is that we all have such big egos. It’s just *me*, there is no *we* anymore”. One consequence of isolation, she points out, is that “taking care of our guild” becomes difficult, and singers without teacher education take on students “without any idea of what [voice teaching] is about”. During visits at music schools and national seminars in the course of the project, several other teachers offered an interesting interpretation of the tendency towards isolation: music education is not just an altruistic project, it is also a market where teachers compete for reputation and promising students. Therefore, not everyone is interested in sharing pedagogical trade secrets. This seems plausible (for similar reports from higher music education, see Juntunen, 2014) and may provide one explanation for the lack of systematic collaborative development.

The work that teachers engaged in during this study, on the other hand, *does* have features associated with practices. Although the participants are experts in different musical areas, their interest in each other’s work reveals shared aims related to musical and personal skills as well as to long-term human flourishing, often described as “inspiration” and “well-being”. A helpful way of thinking about the connection between goodness in music education and human flourishing is offered by virtue theory after MacIntyre. ‘A good relationship to music’ or a similar notion might serve in what Annas (2011), in her account of the notion of happiness in eudaimonist thinking, calls “a mediating role” (p. 125) between general, indeterminate life aims and the specific answer that each person will give to what happiness means in the circumstances of his or her life. Annas frequently uses the skill analogy for describing acquired virtues as personal dispositions that allow human beings to learn to live better. She cites piano playing as one example: in order to play the piano well, one needs practice but also critically reflective judgment and a personal touch; simply doing as one is told or copying other pianists is not enough (Annas, 2011, pp. 13–14, 17). Interestingly, for Annas (2011), virtues are “dispositions which are not only admirable but which we find *inspiring* and take as *ideals* to aspire to, precisely

because of the commitment to goodness which they embody” (p. 109, emphasis original). She argues that the acquisition of virtue involves “the need to learn and the drive to aspire” (p. 16). *Inspiration* is mentioned frequently by the participants in the present study and could be understood as another such mediating concept which can be helpful for processes of contributing to children’s lives as well as for practice development. Consider, for example, the comment by Teacher 5 on the collaborative process: “In another situation I might have become depressed, but now I am inspired instead, thanks to all of you”.

As noted several times earlier in the text, scholarly discussion about Finnish music schools has related the concept ‘a good relationship to music’ to the legal principle of the child’s best interests. One way of finding a definition of the child’s ‘best interests’, Kelly (1997) suggests, is to ask “what combination of factors the child needs” for his or her development (p. 378).¹⁵³ The metaphors of mixing and weaving proposed in this study are similar to the idea of finding right combinations. In addition, as we have seen, ‘a good relationship to music’ is a metaphor in itself and can be used in analogy to human relationships. Understanding the notion in this way enables questions about what ingredients are present in the relationship. Is there an atmosphere of fear, blaming, coercion, unreasonable compromise, and joylessness? Or is the relationship, to use Winnicott’s (1953) expression, “good enough”: not without its inevitable moments of boredom, tension, struggle, sacrifice or frustration, but mostly something that is sustaining and gives life more sense of meaning and joy? Does the person feel ‘at home’ in the relationship, relieved of stereotyping, able to pursue something worthwhile, and supported in living well? Referring back to the heuristic map of goodness in and from music education; is it the case, for the student, that music education enables access to musical practices, contributes to personal happiness and flourishing, is beneficial for the individual and the micro and macro level relationships that sustain him or her, and opens perspectives on central and existential questions in human life? And, referring to the results of the present study, is the learning that takes place in the music school contexts likely to contribute to inspiration and vitality in the student’s life?

Questions such as these can form a background for conversations about music education and redirect attention from justification on the often less fruitful basis of usefulness and productivity. Education itself, Higgins (2011) suggests, can be defined as “the ongoing conversation taking place in the space opened by the question of what best facilitates human flourishing” (p. 258). MacIntyre’s definition of a practice postulates that the aim of improving understandings of its goods and aims is not limited to insiders, but concerns “human conceptions”. Through the stories generated in this study, it becomes evident that such conceptions, as they emerge in conversations or stories about practice, are not limited to ‘how teachers think’. Teachers’ activities have emotional, embodied

¹⁵³ The definition is developed in the context of custody and access arrangements.

and ethical dimensions, and they always involve care and imagination. Unreasonable compromises with regard to the goodness in and from music education that either students or teachers or both consider important may also compromise their well-being. Consequently, I propose that teachers, students, music school directors and parents would benefit from at least periodical open discussion about the goods and values that are aspired for in music schools, even if overrational approaches or attempts to make long-term predictions are probably out of place. Children and young people cannot be expected to take responsibility for the conversation, but they can certainly not be left out of it; students need to be heard and understood as they engage in the process of “making music their own” [music school director] as well as making their own music [Teacher 4]. If strong doubts about any of the questions above emerge, it would be important to take them seriously. Conversely, if the answers present an encouraging picture, the result also constitutes an important message not just for teachers but also for policy makers.

In the Swedish study on parental expectations of music schools cited above (Lilliedahl & Georgii-Hemming, 2009), music is described by parents as a potential “source of joy”. Although this is an important dimension, it is possible to widen the perspective considerably. Music is a source not only of joy but also of many other things, and not all of them are always or necessarily contributive to human flourishing. Here, robust praxialism as described by Alperson provides helpful balance to the more inward-looking, psychoanalytically informed line of thought developed by Kurkela. Alperson’s theory allows for broad contextualisation of some of the problematic issues that Kurkela has pointed out. Music can indeed be a free zone where strong, difficult or forbidden human desires and emotions can be lived through in symbolic form. But there are also blatant examples of music and music education used to manipulate, indoctrinate or corrupt through coercion, seduction, sentimentalism, or reference to unquestioned tradition. Speaking in positive terms about the teaching and learning processes in another participant’s student group, one teacher in this study notes that “the thing” (the drive and support in the group) “lifts the music, but music also lifts the thing. It works in both directions, they overlap in so many ways”. The consequence of the intuitive truth in this observation is that for teachers and researchers, it is important to develop the ability to discern and examine what “the thing” might be in different contexts, and look critically at what “the thing” promotes more generally.

I think it is fair to say that music schools have the potential of becoming constructive hosts to a number of different practices and practitioners and that many schools probably already are at that point. Recent efforts to promote reflective approaches in instrumental/vocal teacher education strengthen this impression. In Finland, Kurkela’s and other scholars’ (e.g. Heimonen, 2002, 2005; Tuovila, 2003) insistence on a sufficiently open foundational concept involving the philosophically huge word ‘good’, and his recommendation that matters related to teaching and learning are “talked over”, may have enabled a

focus on human flourishing within a relatively young organisation of schools. There are of course no guarantees that the project stays solid. Not unlike universities, music schools may be compelled to focus on goods of effectiveness: prestige, fame, status, financial reward. All of those goods have deep and long-standing connections with musical careers and industries. In addition, as already discussed, music and music education can be ‘hijacked’ for just about any ideological purpose. Different versions of striving for human flourishing often seem to be embedded in musical practices. One might argue, therefore, that externally imposed instrumental aims for music education are at best unnecessary and even counterproductive if they are not in tune with the musical practice itself. What *is* important, by contrast, is to discuss openly what is strived for in practices of music and music education.

For MacIntyre, one of the hopes that remain as impersonal and external interests threaten to become overwhelmingly powerful is that individual practitioners uphold their integrity; not just in terms of skills but also in terms of virtue. In the words of Teacher 2, “we have to be tough, those of us who know what we are talking about”. Continuing to cultivate both the skills and the personal qualities associated with good musical and educational practices, then, emerges as a task which is both collective and deeply personal. Tirri, Toom and Husu (2013) point out that in education, phronesis is not a cognitive capacity, but rather “closely bound up in the kind of person that the teacher is” (p. 229). The stories in this study are good illustrations of the personal dimension at the core of teacher practices and their development. ‘Frame factor’ theories in music education, I argue, are likely to fail at least in part if they become faceless; that is, if teachers’ personal qualities and the relations they build with their students are not taken into account.

Of course, far from everything that is significant or problematic about music and music education can be discussed with support from MacIntyre’s practice definition. Coming back to the discussion about the ambiguity of the word ‘practice’ itself, it seems important to remember that music is also a set of unsystematic but ubiquitous social and cultural practices with a large number of functions, and will continue to be so within an educational system, whether students aim for professional careers or not. Music schools ignore “the full range of social, cultural, human, and moral purposes” (Alperson, 2014b, p. 30) of music education at their peril. Moreover, as some of the stories in this study show, there are students and teachers whose lives are so permeated by music that their activities cannot be contained in an institutional framework. It is a paradox that these persons may be precisely the potential and present professionals and life-long music lovers who were targeted by the music school system in the first place.

Throughout the study, what has struck me is how impersonal and therefore inadequate some of the most commonly used terms in educational theory seem when applied to the aspirations that the participants describe. Referring to

‘motivation’ and ‘good learning environments’ is of course not incorrect, but what music teachers talk about is ‘inspiration’ and ‘life’. They tell their students inside jokes and stories from their practices.¹⁵⁴ They listen to what students have to say about living and music. In the same way as musical practices may become feeble if isolated from their cultural, social and intergenerational contexts, the language by which researchers attempt to describe good music education may be weakened if it is isolated from the life contexts where it emerges (see Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 50–51). The conceptual clarity which is needed in order to understand practices of music education and how they develop, then, may hinge not on ever more abstract, top-down descriptions, but on being able to understand the ‘life-like’, humorous, even poetic words and expressions that are characteristic of the practices themselves.

6.3 Methodological evaluation

To my knowledge, this is the first study to develop a systematic analysis method for empirical research in music education explicitly inspired by the praxial philosophy proposed by Alpers (e.g. 1991, 2010b).¹⁵⁵ His approach is rich and demanding in its requirements for multilevel contextualisation, and a second attempt would probably include stronger elements of social and perhaps political analysis. However, the method used here seemed reasonably sufficient for the purposes of this particular research project.

The method, as I understand it in hindsight, has resemblances not only with the interpretive analysis methods from which it was developed (in particular, Yanow, 2000), but also with methods favoured in ethnomusicology (see e.g. Nettl, 2005, especially chapter 27 on teaching and learning; and Nettl, 2012). This is perhaps not altogether surprising. Throughout Alpers’s articulations of his praxial approach (e.g. Alpers, 1991, 1997, 2008), there are hints that a radical commitment to what practitioners have to say might take the line of thought closer to anthropology or ethnomusicology than to philosophy. Making that shift in a more decisive way would be interesting and perhaps less complicated than combining philosophical questioning and empirical research. Still, there is great emphasis on analysis of “what people actually say and do” in Alpers’s theoretical work, motivated by his active immersion in different musical practices,¹⁵⁶ and expressed in ways that border naturally on empirical study. Concrete examples from musical practices abound in his own

¹⁵⁴ One example, contributed by Teacher 3 during rehearsal with a group of violinists aged seven to nine and their fathers and uncles, one of which plays the double bass: “See, violinists have fingerings. Bass players have rough grasps.” [In Finnish: *Viulisteilla on sormituksia. Basisteilla on käsityksiä.*]

¹⁵⁵ Other prominent scholars (Bowman, D. J. Elliott, Regelski) associated with later versions of praxialism have also been cited throughout the text. Alpers’s particular approach seems to have the clearest commitment to practitioner perspectives, and has been highlighted for that reason.

¹⁵⁶ P. Alpers, personal communication, January 12, 2015.

philosophical texts. A philosophical approach does seem justified in this project given its analysis of what might be considered “good” in relations to music and in music education.

Another first, as far as I am aware, is the inclusion of reflecting conversation processes as developed by Andersen and colleagues (e.g. Andersen, 1991; Anderson, 2007) in a music education research design. The thoroughgoing iteration in a process which included several consecutive sessions of collaborative reflecting conversations generated very rich empirical material. Having previous training and experience in the approach was clearly an advantage; however, many interpretive research methods share the same commitment to careful, nonjudgmental dialogue, and similar projects could certainly be undertaken without using exactly the same design.

The challenge for anyone who might wish to work with reflecting conversation processes in a similar way is to find systematic methods of analysis that are appropriate for the purpose of the study in question. Some of the analysis will take place in real time together with participants, as described. In this project, the teachers got to know each other well and were able to ask relevant questions that a researcher might not have thought of, and noticed things that were blind spots for the researcher. Their interpretations of their own and each others’ practices also became more complex and nuanced during the course of the conversations. Immediate interpretations of my own which emerged as I was ‘thinking out loud’ together with the participants, inside the web of collaborative conversation, turned out to be surprisingly adequate, even after several months of additional analysis and reading. This observation is not intended as a selfcongratulatory remark. Instead, I simply want to point out that accuracy in human interpretation about other humans’ intentions can increase (rather than be ‘contaminated’) in their physical presence, through which their own continuous comments, physical expressivity (mimicry, parody, laughter), eye contact, tone of voice, and other communicative aspects enter the interpretive work; the immediate impact of these aspects is largely missing as researchers return to their computer screens, even to analyse audio and video recordings. Subsequent analysis is indeed a more lonely affair, but it is possible to retain a dialogical stance by continuing to ask questions such as: ‘What is it that these practitioners really strive to accomplish? What can I learn about those aspirations from their words, actions, the way they handle and talk about artefacts, the music and persons they mention, and the stories about practice and life that they share?’ At the same time, a certain distance allows researchers to submit their own real time interpretations to critical analysis; what they have said and noted will later become data among data.

Methodological choices are made on the criterion of goodness of fit for a particular study, purpose, or research question. In addition, I believe, they can be a reflection of the researcher’s personal inclinations (see Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 7). For example, the focus on multivoicedness in reflecting

conversation processes spoke naturally to my background in music. Further, finding the right distance to the persons whose work is studied is always a delicate matter, but my priority in this project has been to ensure that the participants feel as adequately represented as possible, together with their strivings. This does not mean that the researcher needs to adopt an uncritical attitude. At different points during the collaborative process and in the text, I have expressed surprise and even worry about some aspects of music school teacher practices, and the participants themselves have taken a critical stance to those practices, including their own work. Readers who have their own views on what is good and worthwhile in music education will find the teachers' arguments more or less convincing, and they will probably have more and other things to say about the teachers' aspirations than the ones I have included in the report.

The element of teacher inquiry and collaborative research in the study allowed for intense and realistic engagement with issues that teachers considered important, going from initial "somewhat messy" [Teacher 2] presentation of situations towards broadening and deepening understandings. J. Elliott's (1987/2007) remark that teachers often find practice-based casework more convincing than theoretical constructs was (re)confirmed in this study. There also seems to be some affinity between Alperson's *praxialism* and J. Elliott's *praxiology* which focuses on practical expressions of educational aims, an approach "very different from a technology grounded in an instrumental and objectivist rationality that separates educational aims from the pedagogical means of bringing them about" (J. Elliott, 2007, p. 3).

Although many music school teachers have studied at a university or a university of applied sciences and are at least to some extent familiar with research methodology, music school teaching is not (as yet) a thoroughly research-based or research-informed profession in Finland. Situations are similar in other countries, and it is an important observation (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 122) that participants cannot be expected to be able to read research literature in several languages, have access to research technology, or have the resources to carry out formal inquiries. In a collaborative project, this puts particular demands on the university researcher, who needs pragmatic flexibility as well as a respectful attitude towards participants in order to cogenrate data without taking the role of the all-knowing academic expert. In the course of this study, although the researcher introduced participants into methods of teacher inquiry, the participants also educated the researcher, supporting the development of an understanding of what was appropriate, helpful, and "enough" [Teacher 1].

During the teachers' own inquiries, they interviewed students and other persons involved in their work. The question of trustworthiness was raised several times in the group discussion, particularly regarding concerns that questions would be answered with the intention of pleasing the teacher. However, the participants

argued, their relationships to students and colleagues were trusting, “we are like a family in a way, so I believe in what they answer” [Teacher 1], and having a long history together with the persons interviewed also opened for the possibility to “give them a stern look and tell them that they *have* to answer honestly!” [Teacher 5]. Questions can steer answers, Teacher 1 remarked, “so in a way, I think I am not really the right person to prepare the questions”. On the other hand, she said, perhaps she was the right person, “because I have the best knowledge about [the student group and its history]”. These brief examples illustrate some of the advantages and pitfalls of teacher inquiry, and underscore the helpfulness of organising several check levels: persons with insight into the particular issue; peers with more general knowledge about similar situations; and researchers who are trained to recognise dubious methods of inquiry.

Some difficulties in collaborative research of this kind are foreseeable; the fact that they did not occur in this project was, I believe, mainly a matter of chance and of participant self-selection. For example, what can the researcher do if participants reveal clearly unethical ways of working or other worrying situations? The ready answer is that the same legal frameworks for mandatory reporting in serious cases apply as in any other context. In less serious situations, the worry becomes part of the research process and group discussion and needs to be handled case by case with a constant view to both research integrity and to the principles of avoiding harm and protecting sustainability. Working with a small group of participants is practical and promotes in-depth conversation. But the group can also become vulnerable to difficulties or life events that can cause one or several participants to drop out, especially when (as in this study) the research process extends over a considerable period of time. In such cases, it would seem important to negotiate the extent to which earlier contributions to the project might still be cited in the report. In this study, for instance, participants became important voices in each others’ stories; having to leave some comments out would clearly have had a negative impact on the quality of the final report.

The most obvious limitation of the study is that even though several triangulation processes have been involved, the research relies to a great extent on teachers’ self-reports. Including researcher interviews with students and/or parents might have been possible. Combining group conversations with classroom observation by the researcher, perhaps together with the participants, might have added the possibility of comparing what teachers say about their aspirations with what they actually do together with the students. At the same time, further analytical dimensions could have overloaded a piece of work which was rather complex at the outset. In addition, the open conversations that were strived for in the group required a high degree of trust which might have been compromised if the participants had felt scrutinised and evaluated. One suggestion might be to start with group conversations and proceed to observation once an atmosphere of trust, collaboration and “being a team” [Teacher 2] is established. Another possibility is to observe and analyse teaching and learning

that takes place when one participant works with another participant's students. This suggestion emerged spontaneously from the study, since Teacher 1 was invited to work on folk repertoire in one of the orchestras conducted by Teacher 3.

A further limitation concerns participant self-selection and negative cases. The participants in this study were interested and engaged in practice development. For the most part, they brought their best examples of successful teaching and learning to the project, prompted by one of the questions articulated in the project: "What do you consider good professional practice?" But what about other teachers and other situations? This study cannot say very much about cases of music school teachers who may be disengaged in their work, unwilling to spend energy developing it, struggling with ongoing conflicts, or uninterested in analysing what might be problematic. The important question of why students drop out is also not answered in this study. However, one of the premises of the research project was that there is something to be learnt from moments when teachers and students succeed in making music school education meaningful. In addition, the participants have provided insight into situations where there is a threat that "inspiration" might be lost, contributed suggestions about what may be involved in such cases, and described what they do to make the overall mix of experiences as good as possible for the students.

Finally, all participants and the researcher undeniably share and represent white, European, middle class educational backgrounds and, to a great extent, traditions from Western classical music. Depending on teacher and researcher specialisations and the composition of the collaborative group, other angles and themes may emerge; alternatively, themes similar to those addressed in the present study may become more prominent. One such theme might for example be how gender issues influence teaching and learning. Although I think that the particular interpretive approach developed here is solid enough to generate understandings also in other contexts, that belief is open to query and can only be confirmed by other studies.

Evaluative criteria for interpretive research practices in the human sciences need to be consistent with interpretive presuppositions, i.e. acknowledgement that (a) situations can be analysed from a variety of perspectives, (b) the researcher's background, previous knowledge, and relation to what is studied influences the choice of analytical perspective as well as other meaning-making processes during the study, and (c) the way in which language is used and stories are crafted for the report impacts understandings. Through metaanalysis of selected prominent criteria literature, Schwartz-Shea (2014) has developed, inductively, four "first-order" terms that are widely used in evaluating the quality and rigor

of interpretive research: *trustworthiness*, *thick description*, *reflexivity*, and *triangulation/intertextuality*.¹⁵⁷

Trustworthiness, according to Riessman (2002), “moves the [validation] process into the social world” (p. 258). Asking if the study can be trusted is to ask whether its analyses and insights can be relied on by other people: researchers, policy makers, and others who are interested in the issues that have been studied (see Schwartz-Shea, 2014, pp. 131–132), and who may wish to take insights from the research into account in their activities. *Thick description*, an expression originally used by Geertz (1973) as an important element in ethnographic reporting, refers to provision of sufficient detail and nuance to support insights and conclusions.¹⁵⁸ The type of description aimed for in interpretive studies will assure readers that the researcher has engaged sufficiently with the contexts and experiences of the participants to produce as well-informed understandings and insights as possible.

In this study, parts of the research process have taken place *in* the social world of people concerned and some implications of the study were put into immediate use by participants. Stories from developing music school teacher practices have been crafted ‘from the midst’ of processes of development and include conversational material and reports from real time analysis. I have engaged with participants, their schools and the administration of their schools, their colleagues, the Association of Finnish Music Schools and its representatives, and the European Music School Union. Through the participants, I have also been allowed to listen to a selection of voices of current and former students. While much of the empirical material has been generated in the seminar room of a university, follow-up interviews also took me to teachers’ homes and classrooms. After an interview, I was invited to sit in the music room where Teacher 1 keeps fiddles, music scores, photographs and memorabilia from numerous concert tours, and listen to her as she played and improvised music of her own. The experience added depth to my understanding of music’s place at the heart and centre of her life, and of how she attempts to impart that same intensity to her students. Sharing lunch with Teacher 4 in her house, looking out the window over fields and forest land, I also gained a concrete and embodied understanding of how having “at least 100 kilometres to the next symphony orchestra” influences her teaching of music history. And on the billboard in the classroom of Teacher 3, drawings, photographs, and handwritten tables with

¹⁵⁷ In addition, three “second-order” criteria are discussed: *informant feedback/member checks*, *audit*, and *negative case analysis*. Not all of these criteria are relevant to all interpretive studies. In the present project, member checks and ‘audit’ (careful record-keeping of the research process) were present throughout the process and have been described in chapter 4. The risk of searching for confirmatory evidence (thus disregarding negative cases) was taken into account through first-order criteria and ongoing collaborative discussion with participants.

¹⁵⁸ Geertz borrowed the notion from Ryle (1968/2009).

stars for remembered practising week by week illustrated the repetitive and still constantly evolving and emotional nature of children's musical learning.

Reflexivity is understood as researchers' understanding of how their own meaning-making processes constitute the main 'instrument' for producing the study. Such awareness ran through the entire project, from initial mapping of the research context, comparison with my own experiences as a Finnish music school student many years earlier, and asking for critical response on pilot interviews, through conscious efforts to expose my interpretations to nuancing by participants and others who were familiar with current practices, to documentation and transparency about the process of data analysis. *Triangulation*, a well-known term used in both positivist and interpretive methodology, might be misunderstood as a 'technique' that enables the researcher to identify a single 'true' position (Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. 133–134). In interpretive research projects, the concern is instead to engage with data from a sufficient number of different sources, to notice and report possible inconsistencies, and to generate evidence that can tell a more complex story than a single source might have allowed for. As an addition or alternative, Schwartz-Shea suggests *intertextuality*, a term often associated with interpretive readings of texts and "text-analogues" (Taylor, 1971) where multiple references, quotes, allusions and changing meanings are seen as a moving conversation in which readers also participate through their own meaning-making.¹⁵⁹ In this study, intertextuality is described as inner and outer conversation with present, remembered and imagined collocutors, musical sounds, traditions, and requirements. Group sessions, interviews and stories in the report have been actively structured to allow for multiple referencing. A salient example of triangulation/intertextuality is the story from the practice of Teacher 5, who has "planted" students in a community orchestra which represents numerous and intersecting relationships to music, described and juxtaposed in questionnaire answers from members of the orchestra and through conversations in the group. Finally, in the research report from the entire study, there is literal engagement with the idea of intertextuality in the metaphors of mixing and weaving used to interpret teachers' aspirations and activities.

6.4 Contributions of the study: Summary and final note

The study provides an understanding of aspirations described by Finnish music school teachers both in terms of the musical skills and the personal qualities they consider important for their students to develop. These aspirations are placed in a larger perspective and interpreted as webs of historical and contemporary aims

¹⁵⁹ Although intertextuality as a concept is often associated with theorisation by 20th century French philosophers, for example Kristeva's (1980) postmodern interpretation of Bakhtin's literary theory, the tradition is considerably older. It is strongly present, for example, in biblical sources and interpretations, as well as in poetry and other literary genres (see Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 84–89).

for music education that come together at the time of the study, the mid-2010s. Central among the teachers' concerns is their hope that students develop a free, meaningful and sustainable interest in music, often described as *inspiration*, a state that can add vitality not just to musical activity but to life as a whole. The study also reports on challenges encountered by the teachers, described mainly as societal pressure, limitations imposed by unwritten institutional rules, or situations where adapting to a variety of students or situations is complicated without more systemic work or interdisciplinary competency.

Methodologically, the study introduces a suggestion for building empirical research on the praxial philosophical approach to music education developed by Alpers (1991, 2010b, 2014a), whose understanding of musical practices is strongly committed to diversity and to practitioner perspectives. The step towards empirical study is taken with support from established interpretive methods elaborated by Yanow (2000, 2014) and Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), and the suggested analytical method, *interpretive practice analysis*, is then developed and adapted for the purpose of the study. In addition, the research design shows how reflecting conversation processes, a collaborative approach well-known in Nordic social work, can be fruitfully applied in interpretive research and combined with teacher inquiry. Although the study was carried out with a small number of participants, their unanimous appreciation for collaborative reflection and inquiry, which are largely absent from the daily work they describe, is noteworthy as an indication of how practice development might be facilitated in music schools and other music education contexts.

The study's contributions to music education theory include discussion and elaboration of Kurkela's notion "a good relationship to music" which has had a profound influence on extracurricular music education in Finland. The concept was introduced in Finnish music school curricula with the explicit purpose of stimulating discussion about the aims of teaching and learning in music schools. It is suggested that this and similar open concepts can be understood as philosophical "mediators" (Annas, 2011) which support the transition from an indeterminate, intuitive 'interest in music' towards specific ways in which music can become a (co-)constitutive part of living well in each person's particular circumstances. 'Inspiration', I propose, may be another such mediating concept.

The Nordic policy that each child should have the right to equal access to extracurricular music education runs the risk of becoming empty of content without ongoing conversation and awareness about the variety of valuable contributions to human life and vitality that are emphasised in different musical practices. This study has contributed some examples of what 'good relationships to music' can mean, how they come about, and how they are connected to human flourishing. The research has built on a commitment to expand understandings about music education by taking a wide perspective on what might be 'good' in and about learning music and what it can mean to live well. I suggest that it is helpful to start such expansion processes from studying

practices themselves, preferably in collaboration with practitioners, rather than from ideological (even ‘praxialist’) convictions. Attempting to understand the immense variety of practices of music and music education and the way in which they develop allows for ever renewed possibilities of profound, critical, and respectful inquiry. My hope is that that the understandings generated in the study can help not just researchers but also teachers, students, families, administrators and policy makers to ask insightful questions about what is important about teaching and learning in music schools, how development can be supported, and how practices can become as constructive, inspiring, and contributive to the good life as possible.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

A central insight from this study is that music school teachers’ efforts to inspire their students take their work to quite remarkable levels of complexity. In the words of Teacher 3, “the reality of what you actually have to do” may surprise both researchers and less experienced practitioners. Several of the teachers in the study say that they have material from a number of interesting projects, but no time to sort it through, analyse, write or publish. If this practical dilemma is widespread among music school teachers across Europe, it opens views on an immense uncharted field well worth studying. As remarked by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), although much practitioner research is published, “there is an enormous amount of activity that exists under the radar of even the most energetic synthesizers” (p. 7). Generating a larger library of stories of the kind that have been told in this study might help build a professional knowledge base for understanding both routinised and nonroutinised practices in music education, as called for by Froehlich (2007a). The participants in this study represent only a part of the instruments and genres taught in music schools, and consequently only one selection of possible aspirations, challenges, and imaginative work.

Other methodological approaches than the ones the present project has built on may also prove helpful. For example, as already mentioned, this study has not included classroom observation. Asking similar questions within a framework of classroom ethnography or site-based action research would provide additional and perhaps different understandings and insights.

In the context of increasing diversity in music school programmes, rich and helpful background knowledge may be developed through interdisciplinary study. Such approaches were called for during this project by several participants who remarked that their education has probably been too narrowly focused on musical skill. Their concern for vitality shows compelling similarities with work in psychology on musical activity as communication of “the vitality and interests of life” (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) and music as imbued with “the feel of being alive and vital” (Stern, 2010). The trait or state of inspiration is underresearched and there are still many questions about what happens when

something “fires the soul”, as noted by Oleynick et al (2014). In addition, understanding values promoted in music schools both as indicators of values appreciated in society and as ‘countermovement’ opens for sociological and cultural questioning which is hinted at in the present study, but lies outside of its scope.

Regarding the philosophical dimension of the research, a number of authors (recently e.g. Bowman, 2012b; D. J. Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Regelski, 2012) have theorised that the Aristotelian notions of praxis and phronesis have a lot to offer music education. In philosophy of music education, I believe that there is still much interesting work to be done with respect to the complex notion of virtue, without which a good understanding of the relation between phronesis and human flourishing is difficult to develop. Also, in addition to phronesis, how might music educators understand the other three ancient cardinal virtues: justice, temperance, and courage? I propose that the early influence of MacIntyre’s practice definition on Alperson’s praxial approach could be reconsidered in order to open helpful connections with contemporary virtue theory, and that the work of Annas (2011) on virtue and eudaimonia might provide good support for further research.

Some questions in particular stay with me as I draw near the closure of this project. Why is it that music school teachers do not seem to discuss professional issues with each other on a regular basis? What might constitute the origin and power of the ‘shadow demands’ that teachers sometimes follow in spite of their deeper convictions? And if music school teachers spend much effort generating and sustaining inspiration and vitality, does this mean that opportunities to experience such states are lacking in music schools and their communities? If so, what may be some of the reasons?

Finally, humbled after gaining new insights about music in spite of several decades of immersion in music education, I note that it is unlikely that we will run out of questions about the ontology of music itself and its significance in human life. Our understanding about what might be ‘good’ in the relationship between human beings and music has certainly improved and deepened through research from many fields of study, including education. But insights and practices develop and change. Music, it seems, has a protean nature. Just as we think we have captured it, when we believe that we know what music is and what it is ‘for’, it escapes our grip and reappears in a new, untamed and intriguing shape.

Svensk sammanfattning

På spaning efter goda musikrelationer. Att förstå strävanden och utmaningar i musikinstitutlärares praktikutveckling.

Inledning

Avhandlingen fokuserar på lärarpraktiker i finländska musikinstitut och de strävanden och utmaningar som kännetecknar lärarnas arbete med att utveckla sin undervisning.¹⁶⁰ Studien har genomförts under en period då musikskolor runtom i Europa upplever både inre och yttre press att anpassa sina pedagogiska praktiker till nya behov i musikbranschen och i samhället. Tidigare studier (Broman-Kananen, 2005; Huhtanen, 2004; Tiainen et al, 2012) visar att musikskollärare i hög grad arbetar ensamma och att det saknas traditioner och rutiner för gemensam reflektion och forskningsbaserat utvecklingsarbete. Individuella lärares strävanden och utvecklingsarbete omvandlas därför sällan till kunskap som kan göras tillgänglig för kolleger och forskare.

De finländska musikinstitut som avses i studien förmedlar frivillig musikundervisning inom ramen för lagen om grundläggande konstundervisning (633/1998). Institutet får lagstadgat statsunderstöd och bygger sin verksamhet på nationella läroplansgrunder som ges ut av Utbildningsstyrelsen (Finnish National Board of Education). Sedan 2002 är den centrala målsättningen i läroplansgrunderna att ”skapa förutsättningar för ett gott förhållande till musiken” (FNBE, 2002). Begreppet ”en god musikrelation” (på finska: *hyvä musiikkisuhde*) formulerades av Kurkela (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997) vars tankar om musikens betydelse för det goda livet har varit betydelsefulla när finländsk policy för musikinstitut har utvecklats, särskilt i fråga om institutens breddade samhällsuppdrag. Numera omfattar ansvaret fortfarande den ursprungliga uppgiften, att bereda möjlighet för blivande yrkesmusiker och musikpedagoger att få utbildning från tidig ålder, men också att ge musikamatörer grundundervisning och att väcka musikintresse hos hela befolkningen (Lag om musikläroanstalter med statsandel 402/1987). Vad som avses med en ”god” musikrelation har avsiktligt lämnats öppet i formuleringen (Heimonen, 2002). En kärnkompetens och huvuduppgift för musikinstitutlärare blir alltså att tolka målsättningen i det dagliga arbetet med olika elever.

¹⁶⁰ Det som i Finland officiellt kallas *musikläroinrättningar/musiikkioppilaitokset* motsvaras i de övriga nordiska länderna av musik- eller kulturskolor. I europeiska länder används den engelska benämningen *music schools*, och det är också den termen som förekommer i avhandlingstexten. Många finländska musikläroinrättningar går under namnet *musikkola* eller *musikinstitut*. I den här sammanfattningen avses med musikinstitut sådana musikläroinrättningar som omfattas av lagen om grundläggande konstundervisning, ger undervisning enligt fördjupad lärokurs där yrkesförberedande element ingår, och åtnjuter statsunderstöd. En majoritet av dessa musikinstitut är medlemmar i Finlands musikläroinrättingars förbund, som i sin tur är Finlands representant i den europeiska musikskolunionen, EMU.

I avhandlingen analyserar jag via litteraturstudier det ”goda” som musikundervisning har ansetts kunna bidra med i växande människors liv, och belyser därefter genom berättelser från fem musikinstitutlärare praktikutveckling dels vad lärarna anser vara eftersträvansvärt och dels hur de tänker sig att detta ”goda” kan förverkligas, samt de svårigheter de möter i sitt arbete. Studien är kvalitativ och tolkande. Forskningen bygger på en tankelinje i musikpedagogisk filosofi, ”robust praxialism” som den har presenterats av Alpersen (1991, 2010b). Empiriskt material har genererats i ett kollaborativt projekt med inslag av reflekterande samtal och lärarforskning. Med utgångspunkt i Alpersens praktiktäna och pluralistiska uppfattning om musik och musikpedagogik, och med stöd av tolkande analysmetoder utvecklade av Yanow (2000) samt Schwartz-Shea och Yanow (2012), utarbetas en *tolkande praktikanalys* för att svara på de frågor som ställs i studien.

Avhandlingens syfte och forskningsfrågor

Avhandlingens syfte är att skapa en förståelse för de strävanden och utmaningar som framträder när musikinstitutlärare arbetar med kollaborativ, reflekterande praktikutveckling, särskilt med avseende på läroplansgrundernas ideal om att skapa förutsättningar för goda musikrelationer.

Forskningsfrågorna har formulerats på följande sätt:

1. Vilka strävanden är viktiga för musikinstitutlärarna som deltar i studien och hur kan deras målsättningar relateras till större debatter om vad som är värdefullt och eftersträvansvärt i musikpedagogik?
2. Hur beskriver lärarna de lösningar de utvecklar för att möta utmaningar i undervisningspraktiken, särskilt med avseende på målsättningen att skapa förutsättningar för goda musikrelationer?
3. Vilka aspekter av kollaborativ reflektion och lärarforskning kan musikinstitutlärare eventuellt uppfatta som värdefulla för arbetet med att utveckla undervisningspraktiker?

Teoretiska landskap

Målsättningar för frivillig undervisning i nordiska musikskolor bygger på det gemensamma idealet att göra musikundervisning tillgänglig för så många barn och unga som möjligt, oberoende av elevernas socioekonomiska bakgrund. Dessutom finns det en strävan att bereda möjlighet för unga att i tillräckligt tidig ålder inleda studier som förbereder för ett yrke inom musiken. Mellan dessa målsättningar uppstår spänningar som kan sammanfattas i frågorna: För vem och för vad ska musikskolor existera? Vilka musikaliska och pedagogiska värderingar och vilka uppfattningar om det goda livet ska försvaras genom musikskolornas verksamhet? Hur kan man hantera balanserandet mellan tradition och mångfald, samt mellan jämlika möjligheter och yrkesförberedande specialisering? Vilka kombinationer av kompetens kan krävas av lärare i musikskolor?

Avsnitt 2.2 utgör en forskningsöversikt som presenterar och diskuterar tidigare studier om musikskolverksamhet i de nordiska länderna. Finländska studier har tagit sig an frågor om elevers upplevelser av studier vid musikinstitut, lärarnas yrkesidentitet, behov av pedagogisk utveckling, principer som kunde ligga till grund för utvecklingen, samt hur skolornas verksamhetsförutsättningar bäst kan stabiliseras i lagstiftning (Broman-Kananen, 2005; Heimonen, 2002; Heino & Ojala, 1999, 2006; Hirvonen, 2003; Huhtanen, 2004; Huhtinen-Hildén, 2012; Kosonen, 2001; Kuoppamäki, 2015; Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999; Marsio, 2014; Pohjannoro, 2010, 2011; Pohjannoro & Pesonen, 2009; Tiainen et al, 2012; Tuovila, 2003). I Danmark har Holst (2011, 2012, 2013) analyserat de kunskapsbaser som kunde ligga till grund för arbetet med att bredda och förbättra undervisning och lärande i musikskolor. Frågor om jämlik tillgång till frivillig musikundervisning och analyser av bristande överensstämmelse mellan elevers förväntningar och lärares ambitioner har varit dominerande i svensk och norsk forskning (Bamford, 2011; Bjørnsen, 2012; Brändström & Wiklund, 1995; Gustavsen & Hjelmbrække, 2009; Hofvander Trulsson, 2010; Holmberg, 2010; Lilliedahl & Georgii-Hemming, 2009; Persson, 2001; Rostvall & West, 2003; Tivenius, 2008).¹⁶¹

Spänningar och frågor som de jag först nämnde bildar grunden för kulturell och politisk debatt om musikskolor och kan analyseras på ett djupare plan än genom ytliga nyttoargument och lokala budgetprioriteringar. I västerländsk tradition har musikens potential och uppgift i den växande människans liv diskuterats livligt åtminstone sedan Platons tankar om hur en god medborgare ska fostras.¹⁶² Diskussionen inbegriper olika uppfattningar om hur det goda och eftersträvansvärda i musik ska uppfattas. Några vanliga åsiktspositioner är (1) att viss musik har ett autonomt och absolut egenvärde; (2) att det eftersträvansvärda i musik utkristalliseras som konsensus inom olika musikpraktiker; (3) att musik blir personligt värdefull för individer och grupper genom en komplex erfarenhetsgrundad process som påverkas inte bara av själva musiken utan också av samverkande biologiska, sociala och kulturella faktorer.

I den här studien tar jag inte ställning för eller emot någon av dessa positioner, utan försöker i stället vara öppen för tankar om ”godhetens” eller det eftersträvansvärda former och variationer (”the varieties of goodness”, von Wright, 1963) som de har beskrivits i musikpedagogisk filosofi, i debatt där musikundervisning försvaras, och i humanvetenskaplig samt även naturvetenskaplig forskning om musik och musikpedagogik.¹⁶³ Jag hämtar stöd i

¹⁶¹ Se även Lindgren (2014).

¹⁶² I *Republiken*, III.

¹⁶³ Referensen till den finlandssvenske filosofen Georg Henrik von Wrights bok om etik (1963) ska inte förstås som en ett försök till jämförelse i fråga om metodologisk och filosofisk strategi; snarare som en bugning och ett respektfullt tack för hjälpen med att formulera variationens betydelse.

en musikfilosofisk tankelinje som har utvecklats av Alperson (1991, 2010b), *robust praxialism*, vilken kan anses omfatta och gå utöver de tre positioner jag har nämnt. Som namnet antyder är Alpersons praxialism orienterad mot praktikerperspektiv på det värdefulla i musik och musikpedagogik. Det ”robusta” eller genomgripande i hans teori avser ambitionen att beakta och beskriva den stora mångfalden i levande musikpraktiker och de värden som eftersträvas och uttrycks genom dem. En djupare förståelse för musikpraktiker, musikpedagogiska praktiker och deras respektive utveckling kan enligt Alperson (2010b) nås genom att undersöka ”de specifika färdigheter, kunskaper och utvärderingskriterier som hör samman med sådana praktiker, hur varierande de än visar sig vara” (s. 183, min översättning). Att försöka förstå undervisningspraktiker i musik kräver också förståelse för de kulturella traditioner man samtidigt studerar, särskilt med avseende på de färdigheter och personliga egenskaper som betraktas som värdefulla (Naqvi, 2012). Omvänt kan en förståelse för vad som eftersträvas inom musikpedagogik ge insikter i vad som värderas i samhället i stort.

Efter Alperson har andra teoretiker utvecklat egna, annorlunda och delvis inkompatibla versioner av praxialism i musikpedagogik (se t ex D. J. Elliott, 1995, 2005; D. J. Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Regelski, 1998, 2011b). Konsekvenserna av att i den här avhandlingen utgå från robust praxialism som den har formulerats av Alperson blir (1) att betrakta musik som ett samlingsnamn på ett stort antal praktiker och underpraktiker, var och en med sina egna värdekriterier, och (2) att det praktikbegrepp som knyts till teoribakgrunden är MacIntyres ofta citerade definition från 1981, som Alperson (1987/1994, 1991) tar hjälp av i sitt tidiga arbete om praxialism:

By a ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that sort of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended. (MacIntyre, 1981/2007, s. 187).

Musikutövande och de musikpedagogiska traditioner som hänger samman med olika musikgenrer kan alltså förstås som sammanhängande, komplexa, socialt etablerade aktiviteter där människor har arbetat och arbetar för nå det som inom varje praktik betraktas som utmärkt eller eftersträvansvärt och därmed också konstituerar den. Hit hör kunskaper och färdigheter, men även personliga egenskaper som gör det möjligt att handla i enlighet med praktikens värderingar och därigenom både uppnå och systematiskt utveckla det goda som gemensamt eftersträvas. I kontrast till det externt eftersträvansvärda (*external goods* eller *goods of effectiveness*), som ekonomiska fördelar eller prestige, karakteriseras det internt eftersträvansvärda (*internal goods* eller *goods of excellence*) av att det utgår från villkor och kriterier som bara kan uppfyllas inom praktiken, att det gagnar alla som deltar i den, och att det även bidrar till mänsklig blomstring både för individer och för samhällen (MacIntyre, 1988, 1999).

Musikinstitut härbärgerar representanter för en rad olika musikpraktiker, från barocksångare till rocktrummisar. Därför är det naturligt att bland musikinstitutlärare möta varierande uppfattningar om vad som är värdefullt och eftersträvaransvärt. Historiska och samtida musikpraktiker med sina respektive värdekriterier lever sida vid sida inom instituten i delvis fragmenterade och ofta blandade former.¹⁶⁴ Samtidigt är lärarna knutna till finländsk pedagogisk och musikpedagogisk tradition och till en institution som har sina egna krav och rutiner (Broman-Kananen, 2005, 2009). Robust praxialism ter sig alltså som en intressant utgångspunkt för att stöda forskning som ställer praktiska, filosofiska och etiska frågor om varierande grunder för undervisning och lärande i musikinstitutkontexter.

Västerländsk litteratur om värdet av att involvera och initiera växande människor i olika former av musikpraktiker är mycket omfattande, inbegriper många discipliner, och sträcker sig tidsmässigt från texter som rör medborgarfostran i antikens Grekland till samtida hjärnforskning om musikens betydelse för barns utveckling. För att kunna hantera den stora och brokiga mängden av musikpedagogisk bakgrundsteori har jag sammanfattat några stora och delvis överlappande tankespår i en heuristisk karta som presenteras i avsnitt 2.3. Kartan ger en inledande bild av hur filosofer, pedagoger och forskare har tänkt sig att musik kan bidra till det goda i ett barns eller en ung persons liv, och den visar också på samband mellan filosofiska teorier och empiriskt orienterad forskning.

I korta drag har musikpedagogik ansetts bidra till mänsklig blomstring genom att

1. ge barn och unga tillgång till musikaliska upplevelser och musikaliskt uttryck, samt göra det möjligt för dem att uppskatta och aktivt delta i musikpraktiker;
2. skapa förutsättningar för ett lyckligare och bättre liv;
3. främja a) individuell utveckling, b) relationer mellan personen och hans eller hennes familj, jämnåriga och omgivande samhälle, c) utvecklingen i det samhälle där personen lever;
4. rikta uppmärksamheten mot centrala och/eller existentiella dimensioner i människans liv.

Dessa teman fördjupas i avsnittet genom exempel ur historisk och vetenskaplig litteratur om musikpedagogik i relation till det goda livet. Därutöver diskuteras orealistiska påståenden om musikens ”godhet”, okritisk idealisering i gränslandet till ”Kitsch” (Kertz-Welzel, 2011; Spychiger, 2011), samt ideologisk ”kapning” av musik och musikpedagogik för problematiska syften.

I avsnitt 2.4 diskuteras finländsk musikskolpolicy genom jämförelser med ideal och värderingar i finländsk pedagogisk tradition, genom analys av målsättningar

¹⁶⁴ Jämför MacIntyre (1981/2007) om etiska traditioner.

i de aktuella läroplansgrunderna för musikinstitut i Finland, och i relation till den heuristiska kartan i 2.3. Därefter, i 2.5, presenteras den teoretiska och kontextuella bakgrunden till begreppet ”en god musikrelation” och orsakerna till dess framträdande plats i läroplansgrunderna. Ett centralt argument i Kurkela's texter är att vad som ska betraktas som ”framsteg” i musikpedagogik behöver grundas i strävanden efter djupt meningsfulla musikrelationer som bidrar till det goda livet. Hur detta ska förverkligas är en fråga som måste ställas utgående från varje elevs person och livsomständigheter. Kurkela riktar därför skarp kritik mot försök att pressa fram synliga resultat som kanske gynnar institutioners eller lärares rykte, men som ofta bygger på att man utnyttjar elevernas behov av trygghet och bekräftelse och därmed riskerar att skada inte bara musikintresset utan också elevens psykologiska utveckling. De målsättningar som musikinstitutlärare behöver ha för ögonen, enligt Kurkela (1995a), ska vara nära knutna till barns utveckling och till musikaliska värden, snarare än till mätbara ”resultat” (jfr MacIntyres distinktion mellan det internt och externt eftersträvansvärda). Begreppet ”en god musikrelation” är i Kurkela's arbete indirekt influerat av psykoanalytisk teori, särskilt objektrelationsteori (Winnicott, Klein, Bion) och självpsykologi (Kohut). Heimonen (2002) knyter begreppet till den juridiska principen om barnets bästa, som även den kräver dialog och klok helhetssyn för att kunna tillämpas i varje enskilt fall. I avsnitt 2.6 diskuteras olika musikpedagogiska perspektiv på hur förutsättningar för goda musikrelationer kan skapas. Huvudlinjer handlar om dialog mellan lärare, elever och föräldrar; respekt för både elevens intressen och lärarens kunnande; och mångsidig lärarkompetens som möjliggör kloka beslut och riktig ”diagnostik” (Froehlich, 2007a) under den process där elevens musikrelation växer fram. Som helhet visar kapitlet att ”det goda” som kan skapas i och genom lärande i musik inte kan betraktas som entydigt eller enhetligt. Däremot verkar det finnas grund för att anta att vissa val och förhållningssätt hos läraren skapar bättre förutsättningar än andra för att goda musikrelationer ska kunna födas.

Metodologisk bakgrund och metodval

Studiens ambition är att skapa en välgrundad, välkontextualiserad och trovärdig förståelse av musikinstitutlärarens strävanden och utmaningar med utgångspunkt i det som lärarna själva beskriver som viktigt och meningsfullt för sin praktikutveckling. Arbetet positioneras inom en humanvetenskaplig kvalitativ, konstruktivistisk och tolkande metodologi vars historiska rötter ska sökas i fenomenologi och hermeneutik (se Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000; Yanow, 2014). Trots inbördes olikheter delar de sistnämnda filosofiska traditionerna ett särskilt fokus på människans meningsskapande aktivitet som den yttrar sig i bland annat handlingar, språk, och artefakter som texter, redskap, symboler och konst.

I kapitel 3 presenteras den logik och de grundantaganden på vilka forskningen bygger. Den kvalitativt tolkande forskningens ontologi kan betraktas som realistisk i den meningen att mänskligt meningsskapande verkligen antas

försiggå (för en diskussion, se Maxwell, 2012). Däremot kan meningsskapandet inte observeras direkt och entydigt. Tolkningsprocessen innefattar i sig ett centralt epistemologiskt dilemma. När människor studerar andra människors livshistorier, värderingar, konstupplevelser och liknande kan observatörer/forskare inte betraktas som neutrala ”mätinstrument” eller källor till entydigt säkra, objektiv kunskap i positivistisk mening. De iakttagelser och tolkningar som forskare gör, vad de är kapabla att lägga märke till och vad de uppfattar som viktigt eller mindre viktigt påverkas oundvikligen av tidigare erfarenheter, kunskaper, och medvetna eller omedvetna övertygelser (Hawkesworth, 2014, s. 35–37). Forskaren är själv en meningsskapande varelse och därför kan alla aspekter av en forskningsprocess, från motiv och syfte till dataurval, analys och slutsatser, påverkas av forskarens egna referensramar. I tolkande forskning försöker man inte bortse från eller eliminera dessa betingelser, utan snarare arbeta med dem och använda dem som viktiga resurser i forskningsarbetet. Forskaren strävar efter att så öppet som möjligt redovisa för tidigare kunskap och antaganden, samt för hur nya erfarenheter och insikter omskapas och nyanseras tolkningarna under forskningsprocessens gång genom kontakt och interaktion med den fråga eller de personer som studeras och genom det pågående tankearbete som möjliggör djupare förståelse.

Den tolkande forskningens grundantaganden får konsekvenser för bland annat metodval, förhållningssätt till personerna som deltar i studien, och den terminologi som används. Förståelse skapas ”genom interaktion mellan forskaren och dem som forskningen gäller medan de försöker tolka [vad som sker socialt, politiskt, kulturellt och på annat sätt i människors liv] och försöker göra dessa tolkningar begripliga för varandra” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, s. 4, min översättning). Forskaren tillämpar abduktivt tänkande där teori, evidens och argumentation konfronteras med varandra medan ny förståelse växer fram. De personer som deltar i studien betraktas som aktiva och centrala tolkare av vad som pågår i deras liv och deras eget meningsskapande vävs samman med forskarens i syfte att nå en så rik och djup förståelse som möjligt av det som studeras i en specifik situation. Sådana processer låter sig svårligen inringas av begreppet ”datainsamling” som antyder att det beforskade existerar i en oberoende verklighet som inte påverkas av forskarens och deltagarnas tidigare erfarenheter eller deras samtal och övrig interaktion. En mera tillämplig term är ”datagenerering”, som bättre förmedlar en bild av aktivitet hos både forskare och deltagare.

I musikinstitutens situation, där man kan anta att många olika traditioner och uppfattningar om vad som är eftersträvansvärt samexisterar och bryts mot varandra, blir det intressant att undersöka konkreta och symboliska *samtal* där uppfattningarna uttrycks. Samtalsmetaforen har använts i en rad teorier. Inom dialogism tänker man sig till exempel att människors kommunikation inte bara sker mellan de faktiskt närvarande personerna, utan också med och mellan sociokulturella traditioner (Linell, 2009). Samtalen äger dessutom rum inom personer, som när man verkar ”diskutera” ett beslut med sig själv (se t ex

Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Inom läroplansteori beskriver Pinar (2012) *curriculum* som en ”komplicerad konversation” mellan närvarande, historiska och framtida deltagare som är betydelsefulla för det sammanhang där undervisning och lärande äger rum. Samhällsfilosofen Oakeshott (1959/1991) försvarar i *The voice of poetry in the conversation of mankind* en syn på samhällsdebatt där olika erfarenhetsformer kan göra sina röster hörda; i musikpedagogisk filosofi har Swanwick (1996, s. 44) påpekat att musik kan betraktas som en sådan ”röst”. Musikinstitutlärare befinner sig alltså i någon mening i pågående samtal om vad deras arbete innebär och vilket deras ansvar ska vara. De deltar själva i samtalet, men påverkas också av andra konkret och symboliskt närvarande deltagare.

I omedelbar bemärkelse ingår samtal om undervisning och lärande i en lång rad traditioner och metoder för att utveckla lärarpraktiker. Antagandet att lärare kan förbättra sina arbetssätt genom att aktivt diskutera dem med kolleger och andra relevanta personer ligger till grund för till exempel reflekterande praxis, lärarforskning, kollaborativ forskning, aktionsforskning, gruppmentorskap och fortbildning. Inom musikpedagogik har sådant arbete beskrivits och dokumenterats av bland andra Burnard och Hennessy (2009), De Baets och Buchborn (2014), Odam och Bannan (2005), Roulston et al (2005) och Juntunen, Nikkanen och Westerlund (2013). Bland andra Cain (2008) har studerat aktionsforskning i musikpedagogik; Gaunt och Westerlund (2013) har beskrivit kollaborativt reflekterande arbete i högre musikutbildning; Cain (2009) och Haddon (2009) har diskuterat mentorskap för blivande musikpedagoger, och Burnard och Björk (2010) har argumenterat för täta elev-lärardialoger för att förbättra undervisning och lärande i musik. Mycket av det som är betydelsefullt och konstituerande i musik upplevs som svårt att klä i ord (se Zandén, 2010). Även om samtal är viktiga, kan praktikutveckling och forskning i musikpedagogik knappast skiljas helt från musikens klingande form.

Sammanfattningsvis borde en forskningsdesign som svarar mot ovanstående grundantaganden och betingelser för studien alltså uppfylla åtminstone fyra kriterier. Den ska (1) involvera konkret praktikutveckling där frågor om målsättningar och det eftersträvaransvärda diskuteras, (2) uppfattas som relevant av både deltagare och forskare, (3) tillåta iterativa och flexibla forskningsprocesser, och (4) generera rika data där man också kan hänvisa till klingande musik.

Det mest lovande formatet för att uppfylla dessa kriterier är ett kollaborativt projekt med inslag av lärarforskning, där musik också kan ingå i diskussionen. Den design som har valts påminner om aktionsforskning inspirerad av J. Elliott (2000/2007, 2007, 2009), vars senare texter uttryckligen påverkats av MacIntyres tankar om att tolka och omtolka traditioner. J. Elliott (2000/2007) rekommenderar att lärare engagerar sig i gemensam reflektion om sina praktiker genom att försöka relatera situationer ur undervisningspraktiken till sina egna värderingar och övertygelser, men också till andra relevanta källor och historiska

texter (s. 199). Enligt J. Elliott (2007) innebär ett sådant utvecklingsarbete att lärare och forskare blir delaktiga i ett "conversational community" (s. x) där frågor om vad som är gott för människan alltid måste ingå i samtalet.

Förutom aktionsforskning och andra former av kollaborativt tolkande forskning (t ex Wasser & Bresler, 1996) har forskningsdesignen även inspirerats av reflekterande samtal, ett arbetssätt som utvecklats i socialt arbete i Norge och numera är välkänt i de nordiska länderna och även på vissa håll i USA (se t ex Andersen, 1991; Anderson & Jensen, 2007). Arbetssättets relevans för projektet är dess likhet med kollaborativ forskning där deltagarnas egna upplevelser och uppfattningar betraktas som centrala. Det dialogiska förhållningssätt som ligger till grund för reflekterande samtal stämmer också väl överens med Kurkelas påpekanden att dialog är en nödvändig förutsättning för att elever ska kunna utveckla goda musikrelationer, och att musikinstitutlärare kan vidga och berika sina egna perspektiv genom att "tänka tillsammans" och "prata igenom saker" (personlig kommunikation, 14 november 2012).

Principer för dataanalys har utvecklats med utgångspunkt i en etablerad tolkande metod hämtad ur policyanalys (Yanow, 2000), utvidgad med specifika analyskriterier för en musikpedagogisk kontext. En noggrannare beskrivning av hur Yanows metod har anpassats för det här projektet följer i nästa avsnitt.

Forskningsdesign

Data har genererats i ett kollaborativt projekt där fem musikinstitutlärare gemensamt och tillsammans med forskaren har arbetat med teman och frågor ur sin undervisningspraktik. Projektet förbereddes bland annat genom pilotintervjuer med två musikinstitutpedagoger och flera intervjuer med ordföranden för Finlands musikläroinrättnings förbund. Deltagarna rekryterades via information under ett regionalt musikinstitutseminarium samt genom uppföljande skriftliga inbjudningar. Projektet kombinerade fortbildning och forskning under rubriken *Musikpedagogik mellan tradition och förnyelse* och arrangerades i samarbete med forskarens universitet. Samtliga deltagare hade minst 15 års erfarenhet av att undervisa vid finländska musikinstitut och var väl förtrogna med läroplansgrunderna.

Under fem seminarieliknande sessioner (en träff per månad mellan februari och maj samt en avslutande träff i november) arbetade lärarna och forskaren tillsammans med frågor som lärarna själva var intresserade av. Frågorna handlade om situationer som deltagarna ville förändra eller redan hade förändrat, och valdes inom ramen för projektets gemensamma teman: läroplansgrundernas mål, lärarens roll för att främja goda musikrelationer, god yrkespraxis, utmaningar i arbetet, och önskemål för samarbete mellan forskare och lärare. Varje lärare initierade ett mindre forskningsprojekt inom projektet, genererade egna data och diskuterade processen i grupp. Forskarens roll var till en början att stöda lärarna i att strukturera egna frågor och projekt, hjälpa dem att välja forskningsmetoder, presentera reflekterande samtal som arbetsform, och föreslå

bakgrundslitteratur. Från och med den andra sessionen övergick forskarpositionen till att vara mera faciliterande och (med)reflekterande. Samtalen strukturerades enligt en version av Andersens (1991) reflekterande samtal och presenterades som en ”musikalisk” växling mellan solo och ensemble, där den lärare vars arbete var i fokus fick möjlighet att berätta själv, lyssna medan de andra deltagarna och forskaren talade om den situation som presenterats, och delta i hela gruppens samtal. Syftet var att skapa vad Shotter och Katz (2008) kallar ”a stance of witness”; en psykologiskt trygg atmosfär där alla närvarande respektfullt ställer sin responsförmåga, sitt tänkande och sitt varande till personens förfogande medan arbetet pågår (se även Anderson, 2007, s. 34).

Under de 18 månader som följde ordnades individuella, halvstrukturerade uppföljningsintervjuer med varje lärare parallellt med analys av data från gruppssessionerna. Intervjuerna byggde på insikter från det redan inledda tolkningsarbetet. Dessutom besökte jag varje musikinstitut för att skapa dialog om projektet och informera om hur liknande kollaborativt arbete kunde initieras och genomföras av andra intresserade. Jag presenterade också projektet vid ett nationellt seminarium som organiserades av Finlands musikläroinrättingarnas förbund (SML). En sista fas av datagenerering handlade om begreppet ”en god musikrelation” och skedde genom arkivsökningar vid musikläroinrättingarnas förbund och vid Riksarkivet, informella samtal med förbundets verksamhetsledare, och en halvstrukturerad intervju med Kari Kurkela kring begreppet ”god musikrelation”.

Huvuddata bestod av ordagranna transkriptioner från gruppssessionerna (25:27:17) och från uppföljningsintervjuerna med varje lärare (05:58:49). Data som genererats av lärarna inkluderades om de hade presenterats i gruppen och ingick därför oftast i de ovannämnda transkriptionerna. Ytterligare transkriptioner gjordes från en intervju med en av lärarna och rektorn för hans musikinstitut samt från två intervjuer som en annan av lärarna gjort med fem av sina egna elever. Kompletterande data bestod av en inspelning av en radiointervju gjord tio år tidigare med en av lärarna och hennes elever, elektronisk brevväxling mellan forskare och deltagare, samt inlägg, frågor och kommentarer publicerade på en gemensam projektblogg. Jag förde också handskrivna anteckningar under gruppssessioner, intervjuer och besök vid musikinstitut. Slutligen transkriberades även intervjun med Kari Kurkela (01:01:06).

Tolkande dataanalys utfördes i fem delvis överlappande etapper. *Den första tolkningsetappen* utfördes ”i realtid” under varje gruppssession. Det tematiska urval som gjordes av deltagare och forskare betraktades som en första tolkning och syntes. Forskarens och deltagarnas kommentarer och tolkningar under samtalets gång nyanserades, kommenterades och kunde också avfärdas av den lärare som var i fokus. *Den andra tolkningsetappen* utgjordes av det aktiva arbetet med transkriptioner (se Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, s. 184–186), som

utfördes mellan gruppssessionerna och efter den sista sessionen. Tankar och tolkningar från transkriberingsprocessen återfördes till samtal under gruppssessioner eller uppföljande individuella intervjuer. *Den tredje tolkningsetappen* skedde tillsammans med deltagarna under uppföljningsintervjuerna, där ytterligare frågor ställdes och lärarna hade möjlighet att precisera eller fördjupa uttalanden från gruppssessionerna och kommentera forskarens tolkningar. *Den fjärde tolkningsetappen* utfördes helt och hållet som skrivbordsarbete med stöd av en metod som utvecklades med utgångspunkt i tolkande policyanalys (Yanow, 2000). I Yanows metod analyseras policyrelevanta aktörers ord, symboliska objekt och handlingar samt de innebörder dessa har för aktörerna. Efter diskussion med Yanow utvidgade jag data till att omfatta vad deltagarna refererar till som meningsfullt eller eftersträvansvärt genom att (1) använda ord som signalerar uppskattning eller kritik, (2) utföra eller beskriva en handling, (3) hantera en artefakt på ett speciellt sätt eller beskriva hantering av en artefakt på ett speciellt sätt, (4) utföra eller hänvisa till klingande musik, (5) hänvisa till personer, eller (6) berätta historier, inklusive hänvisningar till samtal som förts med andra personer eller inom läraren själv.

Under *den femte tolkningsetappen* skrev jag forskningsrapporten som en sammanställning av ”berättelser ur lärarnas praktikutveckling”, vilket också innebar att jag som forskare på nytt utförde tolkande arbete genom att välja ut det material som skulle vara med i rapporten, redigera, samt fatta beslut om vad som skulle formuleras och hur. I det här sista analyskedet integrerades tre perspektiv: robust praxialism (2.2), uppfattningar om musikpedagogikens kopplingar till det goda livet och hur dessa har synliggjorts i musikskolpolicy (2.3 och 2.4), samt begreppet ”en god musikrelation” (2.5 och 2.6). Till sist användes en koncentrerad version av forskningsfrågorna: vad innebär det ”goda” i relation till musik för musikinstitutlärarna i projektet och hur yttrar sig deras strävan efter detta goda?

Rapporten delar vissa drag med studier som bygger på narrativ forskning, aktionsforskning och fallstudier. Som helhet är avhandlingen inte renodlat representativ för någon av dessa traditioner, men förbinder sig till huvudprinciperna i tolkande analys: iterativ process, kontextualisering, abduktiv logik, och strävan efter djup insikt.

Nationella etiska riktlinjer har följts i studien¹⁶⁵ och ytterligare etiska överväganden gjordes kontinuerligt i samråd med deltagarna under hela projektets gång, från planering av lärarforskningsprojekt till avslutande avstämning med deltagarna (”member check”, se Schwartz-Shea, 2014; Stake, 2010). Trovärdighet har eftersträvats genom grundlig teoretisk diskussion av öppna begrepp och debatter om ”det goda” i musikpedagogik (kapitel 2),

¹⁶⁵ Forskningsetiska delegationen, <http://www.tenk.fi/sv/etikpr%C3%B6vning-inom-humanvetenskaperna>. Läst 22 september 2015.

kontinuerlig uppföljning och uttalad dialog kring forskarens och deltagarnas tolkningar, samt jämförelser mellan flera olika källor: lärarnas berättelser, kommentarer från elever och andra personer som har koppling till lärarnas arbete, analys av styrdokument, samt både formella och informella samtal med representanter för Finlands musikläroinrättningars förbund. Studien har i olika skeden av arbetet även presenterats vid nationella och internationella musikpedagogiska seminarier och konferenser.

Berättelser från musikinstitutlärares praktikutveckling

I den här delen presenteras referat av berättelser från varje lärares praktik. De narrativa avsnitten är sammanställda efter de fem tolkningsetapper som beskrivits ovan. Detaljerade hänvisningar till de sex olika former av referenser som beskrivits ovan ingår inte, utan har integrerats i texten. Utöver berättelserna ur varje lärares perspektiv redovisas också gemensamma teman som lärarna lyfte fram i samtalen, inklusive konflikter ur undervisningsvardagen.

Lärare 1 beskriver sin viktigaste målsättning genom ordet ”inspiration”: att eleverna ska bli så inspirerade av musicerandet att de fortsätter att spela hela livet. I hennes egen musiker- och lärarpraktik kombineras klassisk tradition och den lokala folkmusik för vilken hon är en prominent representant. Ambitionen att bevara och utveckla praktikerna tillsammans med eleverna har tidvis drivit Lärare 1 att arbeta i musikinstitutets periferi och organisera resor och andra evenemang som inte nödvändigtvis förväntas av henne i lärarrollen. Institutet stöder lärarpraktiken, men kan inte rymma allt det som musiken och en djupare förståelse av den innebär. Folktraditionens kunnande och djupare mening måste förmedlas via gehör, omedelbar upplevelse, och musicerande där flera generationer är närvarande, såväl konkret som symboliskt. Lärare 1 upplever ett starkt ansvar för att hjälpa eleverna att utveckla utmärkta färdigheter. Samtidigt är hennes strävan att främja upplevelser och egenskaper som bidrar positivt till människans liv i stort: glädje, vitalitet, humor, kompetens, inre styrka, nyfikenhet, och en känsla av samhörighet med en historisk och social gemenskap. Hon beskriver kreativitet och fantasi som ”en oerhört fin galenskap” genom vilken mål som först verkar omöjliga kan förverkligas, samtidigt som människan själv förändras genom att vara nyfiken på nya horisonter och acceptera de utmaningar och det arbete som stora strävanden för med sig. Under projektet lyssnar deltagarna och forskarna också på inspelningar där läraren spelar tillsammans med elever i en särskilt framgångsrik grupp. Känslan av ”att ha roligt”, ”att inspirera varandra” och ”att musiken talar direkt till en” (Lärare 1) verkar ögonblickligen förmedlas till de övriga lärarna, som talar om den starka ”energin” i klangen och om intrycket att de unga violinisterna ”känner musiken” (Lärare 3) och att den blir ”en livlina” (Lärare 2) för dem.

Lärare 2 undervisar i sång och arbetar under projektet med att utveckla och förstå vad som krävs för att hjälpa elever att bli kunniga i både klassiska och populära sångstilar. Hon uppmuntrar mångsidighet, öppenhet och nyfikenhet, men ser det också som sitt huvuduppdrag att ”hitta en fri röst utan spänningar”.

Under projektet analyseras videoinspelningar av elever som har lyckats bli ”dubbla” och kan sjunga musik ur flera olika genrer på ett trovärdigt sätt. Lärarens stilkännedom, kunskap om sångröstens anatomi och om andningens betydelse för att undvika röstskador behöver alltid finnas med när hon och eleverna tillsammans fattar beslut om repertoar och målsättningar. Även andra och ibland komplicerade aspekter beaktas när läraren för yttre och inre samtal om sin undervisning: elevens bakgrund och önskemål, kollegernas varierande uppfattningar om vad som är passande, och balansgången mellan de krav som ställs inom olika sångstilar. För Lärare 2 är sångundervisning ett fysiskt hantverk där rösten formas inom en mästare-gesälltradition. Hon poängterar att kroppen tar till sig förändringarna gradvis. Okänslig kritik, perfektionism och alltför hård press kan ha stora oönskade konsekvenser, och hon beskriver lyhördhet för elevens röst och personlighet som en central del av sitt arbete och ansvar som lärare. Det ”goda” hon eftersträvar handlar om att visa på musikens plats i människans liv, något ”fint man kan göra” som utgör en konstant del av tillvaron oberoende av övriga livshändelser. Det ”fina” och ”roliga” konstitueras av musikaliska färdigheter, kunskaper och gemenskaper, fysisk hälsa och frihet från spänningar. Mångsidighet skapar förutsättningar för eleverna att delta i olika musikpraktiker. Lärare 2 strävar därför kontinuerligt efter att bredda sina egna kunskaper så att de räcker till för att öppna nya, berikande och glädjefyllda möjligheter.

Lärare 3 har utvecklat gruppundervisning för pojkar som spelar violin. Under projektet diskuteras de speciella utmaningar som hör samman med undervisning och lärande i grupp, samt med stereotypa uppfattningar om genus och instrumentval. Lärare 3 är särskilt noggrann med att skapa en trygg atmosfär i gruppen, där stora utmaningar balanseras med humor, lekfullhet, framväxande vänskap och klara regler. Flera årskullar av pojkar som deltar i hans violingrupper går i samma skola och deras samhörighet verkar skydda dem från att bli mobbade för sitt spelande. En viktig målsättning är att grupperna ska bli autonoma, välja sin egen repertoar, och upprätthålla musicerandet och vänskapen också under känsliga perioder i pojkarnas liv. Läraren anser att eleverna självklart på sikt ska delta i musikgrupper med både pojkar och flickor, men enligt hans erfarenhet har flickor i åldern 7 till 9 ofta ett så stort försprång med avseende på mognad och skicklighet att pojkarna tillfälligt kan behöva ”något eget” där de tillåts vara ”så små som de faktiskt är”. Det är centralt, säger han, att bibehålla ett långsiktigt perspektiv, ”att man har livet också om tre år, inte bara imorgon och nästa måndag”. Förutom de musikaliska färdigheter som eleverna arbetar med under lektionerna betonas också personliga egenskaper som ”skärpa” (*terävyys*), uppmuntrande attityd mot andra, självkännedom och ärlighet. Läraren arbetar aktivt och processororienterat med att skapa förutsättningar för att eleverna ska kunna uppleva musikalisk gemenskap och få erfarenheter av att känna sig accepterade och intensivt levande. I dessa ambitioner kombineras målsättningen att lära sig spela violin med strävan efter det goda livet.

Lärare 4 arbetar med att utveckla undervisning och läromedel för musikinstitutets obligatoriska kurs *Musikens grunder*, som innefattar musikteori, solfège och musikhistoria. Hon anser sig inte ha fått den pedagogiska utbildning som skulle krävas och har under årens lopp utprövat olika sätt att undervisa som stämmer överens med hennes egna övertygelser om hur unga elever kan bredda sina perspektiv på musik och musikaliskt skapande i människans liv. En stor utmaning är att musikinstitutet ligger geografiskt långt från urbana miljöer där eleverna skulle ha större möjligheter att uppleva en mångfald av levande musikpraktiker. Under projektet utarbetar läraren en elevenkät med syftet att förstå hur hennes undervisningsmetoder inverkar på elevernas lärande och hur väl målsättningarna att skapa frihet och personlig mening uppfylls. Elevernas svar ger vid handen att läraren har lyckats skapa den variation hon eftersträvar, men att hon behöver styra undervisningen tydligare för att eleverna ska utveckla de kunskaper som behövs för att förstå musik från olika stilar och perioder. En central uppgift blir att hitta balans mellan institutionens ramar och lärarens förhoppning att eleverna ska hitta ”något eget” i den väldiga rikedom som musiken erbjuder, och därigenom också kunna uppleva att deras liv blir öppnare och rikare.

Lärare 5 har tagit sig an utmaningen att försöka hitta kontexter där hennes violinelever kan fortsätta spela efter att de har fått sin examen från musikinstitutet. En lösning har varit att ”infiltrera” eleverna i en lokal kyrkoorkester där medlemmarna representerar flera generationer av musikentusiaster, ett sammanhang som läraren känner väl och litat på: ”Jag skulle aldrig ta med eleverna på någonting om jag inte visste att det var bra”. Läraren spelar själv i orkestern och kan hjälpa sina elever under repetitionerna, men beskriver de andra medlemmarna som ”medlärare”: de stöder, uppmuntrar och beundrar de unga violinisternas insatser. Dirigenten bidrar också på ett avgörande sätt till att skapa en vänlig och uppskattande atmosfär där eleverna kan utvecklas tryggt och där deras ”fräscha och ungdomliga” violinklang får en speciell betydelse. Även om läraren har uppfattat arrangemanget som positivt för alla parter, utarbetar hon en enkät med syftet att bättre förstå vad det intergenerationella musicerandet betyder både för hennes elever och för de äldre medlemmarna i orkestern. Svaren visar att både yngre och äldre orkestermedlemmar uppskattar möjligheten att i ett praktiskt sammanhang och i samarbete med andra människor lära sig att hantera instrument, behärska de oskrivna regler som hör till musicerandet, lyssna på andra och ta ansvar för sin egen insats. De äldre medlemmarna blir förebilder för de yngre också när det gäller variationen i hur en ”god musikrelation” kan se ut: motiven för att delta i orkesterns verksamhet är inte enbart eller nödvändigtvis religiösa, utan sträcker sig från ambitioner att förbättra speltekniken till de upplevelser av ”reningsbad” som det kan innebära att uppföra långa, krävande verk som Bachs Matteuspassion. Det ”goda” som *Lärare 5* eftersträvar kan sammanfattas som ett samspel mellan kunskaper och personliga egenskaper och möjligheten att med stöd av dessa få spela inspirerande repertoar i ett socialt sammanhang där

individerna får uppleva uppskattning och uppmuntran. I uppföljningsintervjun berättar läraren att hon efter projektet har börjat intressera sig för äldre violinamatörer som har spelat när de var yngre men blivit nedslagna av negativa erfarenheter. Hennes önskan är att skapa violinundervisning som kan hjälpa personer för vilka musikinstitutet ”var hemskt hela tiden” tillbaka till att ”må bra med sitt instrument”.

Gemensamma teman som engagerade alla lärare i projektet handlade om möjligheten att aktivt stöda eleverna i att hitta till meningsfulla musikpraktiker, även utanför mainstreampop; att hjälpa eleverna att hitta balans mellan höga mål och den omedelbara njutningen i att musicera; att lära känna eleverna tillräckligt bra för att kunna fatta kloka, gemensamma beslut om musikens plats i deras liv; att vara medveten om föräldrars och andra viktiga personers betydelse för elevernas musikaliska utveckling; att främja och skydda inspiration, vitalitet och glädje; samt att förhålla sig till och stå emot uttalade och oskrivna regler som har negativ inverkan på lärande, entusiasm och känslan av att vara intensivt levande. Deltagarna ansåg att arbete i grupp kan stärka deras strävanden att bevara meningsfulla praktiker, hålla fast vid sådant de själva betraktar som väsentligt, och initiera förändringsprocesser där sådana är befogade. Samtliga deltagare uttryckte uppskattning för de nya idéer, den stöd och de ”männliga kontakter” (Lärare 4) de hade fått under projektet. Lärare 3 formulerade sin evaluering på ett sätt som visar släktskap med MacIntyres praktikdefinition: ”Det bästa var att vi verkligen pratade om praktiken. Och alla har erfarenhet, och alla är kloka”.

Konflikter som beskrevs handlade ofta om spänningar mellan musikinstitutets oskrivna regler eller föreställningar om samhällets förväntningar och de prioriteringar som lärarna själva uppfattar som nödvändiga. Flera av deras berättelser innehöll antydningar om en sorts civil olydnad där lärare ”gör vad de behöver göra” (Lärare 4) för att ”eleverna ska blomstra” (Lärare 1) och för att stöda elevernas utveckling mot en djupare förståelse av musikpraktiker. ”Vad man i verkligheten måste göra” (Lärare 3) framträder genom att läraren beaktar sin egen kunskap men samtidigt även försöker förstå elevens helhetssituation på både kort och lång sikt. Musikinstitutets ramar och rutiner räcker inte alltid till för att göra det som behövs, och det arbete lärarna gör motsvaras inte alltid av den ekonomiska kompensation de får. Att utveckla undervisningspraktiker genom en förståelse för vad som är ”gott” i relation till musik för eleverna verkar kräva att lärarna är känsliga för variation och har tillräcklig styrka för att beakta både självkritik och yttre kritik utan att ge avkall på vad de själva uppfattar som meningsfullt.

Slutsatser

Studiens slutsatser om vad musikinstitutlärare strävar efter kan sammanfattas genom två samverkande dimensioner av deras arbete:

- **Att skapa förutsättningar för goda musikpraktiker, där meningsinnehållet i ordet ”god” bestäms av sammanhanget**
- **Att skapa förutsättningar för inspiration och vitalitet**

Dessa målsättningar stöder varandra och kan bilda en ”god cirkel” både i den dagliga undervisningen och i vad lärarna hoppas att eleverna ska utveckla på längre sikt. Det som betraktas som eftersträvansvärt både för elever och för lärare kan vidare specificeras som a) att utveckla specifika färdigheter och erfarenheter inom det musikområde som är aktuellt, b) att utveckla relaterade färdigheter och egenskaper som underlättar aktiv delaktighet i musikpraktiker, c) att odla personliga egenskaper som kan öka chanserna att leva ett gott liv, d) att skapa sammanhang där det finns möjlighet att uppleva inspiration och vitalitet.

Forskningsfråga 1, första delen (a): Vilka strävanden (gällande elevernas utveckling) är viktiga för musikinstitutlärarna i studien?

Lärarna strävar efter att hjälpa sina elever att utveckla färdigheter och bygga upp erfarenhet inom specifika musikaliska kompetensområden på ett sådant sätt att eleverna kan ”göra musiken till sin egen” och förstå vad som är väsentligt inom speciella praktiker. Samtidigt uppmuntras färdigheter som underlättar delaktighet i musikpraktiker, från korrekt hantering av praktikens artefakter och behärskning av dess sociala former till förmågan att förhålla sig uppmuntrande till andra eller kunna bidra med humor och lekfullhet som balanserar det krävande arbetet. Enligt lärarna kan musikpraktiker både fostra och gynnas av personliga egenskaper som kan bidra positivt till unga personers liv i stort: skärpa, fokus, hälsa, uthållighet, nyfikenhet, öppenhet, intiativförmåga, självinsikt, ärlighet, ödmjukhet och självförtroende. Upplevelser av vitalitet och inspiration i samband med musicerande anses som centrala och lärarna söker tidvis upp sammanhang utanför musikinstitutets ramar för att skapa vad de betraktar som rätta förutsättningar.

Forskningsfråga 1, första delen (b): Vilka strävanden (gällande deras egen praktikutveckling) är viktiga för musikinstitutlärarna i studien?

Lärarna beskriver strävanden efter mångsidiga kunskaper och färdigheter (till exempel flera musikgenrer eller kunskaper i dirigerings) som kan gagna undervisningen. Ingen kan behärska allt, men ”det finns alltid något nytt att lära sig” (Lärare 3) både om musikpraktiker och om barns och ungas utveckling, och flera av lärarna efterlyser utökat tvärvetenskapligt samarbete. Lärarna odlar medvetet egenskaper som (1) hjälper dem i undervisningen, till exempel förmågan att kunna lyssna sig fram till vad en elev behöver och förstå vad som är viktigt i specifika utvecklingsskeden, samt (2) karakteriserar en ”bra lärare”, till exempel humor, ärlighet, tålmod, omsorg, ödmjukhet, lekfullhet och eget

välstånd. Arbetet är stundtals repetitivt och det finns en reell risk för att bli uttråkad, trött och demoraliserad. Att bibehålla sin egen inspiration är därför en central målsättning för lärarna, som skapar projekt och ”galna mål” (Lärare 1) som motvikt. Ofta uttrycks dilemmat som att känna sig ”halvdöd” eller ”död” i skarp kontrast till de starka känslor av vitalitet som musik kan skapa. Det blir därför också mycket betydelsefullt att upprätthålla sitt eget musicerande och sina egna intressen, ”hjärtat i en människa” (Lärare 2).

Forskningsfråga 1, andra delen: Hur kan lärarnas mål relateras till större debatter om vad som är värdefullt och eftersträvansvärt i musikpedagogik?

Lärarnas strävanden efter goda cirklar där musikutövande knyts till personliga egenskaper samt vitalitet och inspiration visar att de klassiska kopplingarna mellan praktik (*praxis*), fronesis och mänsklig blomstring (*eudaimonia*) kan betraktas som relevanta för studien. De målsättningar som beskrivs kan tolkas som en strävan efter något gott, snarare än som spänningar mellan tänkta motsättningar som inommusikaliskt/utommusikaliskt, klassisk musik/populärmusik, eller höga ambitioner/amatörmusicerande. I likhet med föräldrar till kulturskoleelever i en studie av Lilliedahl och Georgii-Hemming (2009) hoppas lärarna att eleverna ska hitta ”sin grej”. I detta sökande samverkar många villkor och omständigheter: det som inom musikpraktiker betraktas som eftersträvansvärt och värdefullt; elevens livssituation och egna preferenser; de relationer som omger elevens musicerande; lärarens egen entusiasm för musik av olika slag. Studien ger konkreta exempel på Bowmans (2005c) påpekande att musikens kraft ”alltid beror på hur, med vem, för vem och under vilka förhållanden vi engagerar oss i musikande (*musicizing*) och musikundervisning” (s. 126, min översättning). Att acceptera och uppmuntra många olika sätt att syssla med musik på ett meningsfullt sätt (Alperson, 2010b, s. 191) öppnar möjligheter både för lärare och för elever att nå insikter om vad andra har uppfattat som värdefullt och vad de själva kan komma att uppleva som värdefullt i olika situationer och under olika perioder av sina liv. Att ställa tradition och elevens önskemål i motsatsförhållande framstår därför också som en förenkling: musikpraktiker innefattar mål, aktiviteter och sätt att relatera till andra som eleverna upptäcker och utvecklar i samspel med mera erfarna deltagare i praktiken.

Globalisering och digitalisering av musikpraktiker som har lyfts fram i internationell musikpedagogisk debatt nämndes sällan i lärarnas samtal. Musikinstitutens framgångar betraktade som nationalistiskt, patriotiskt och identitetsskapande projekt var också i stort sett frånvarande i samtalen, vilket är intressant eftersom sådana målsättningar hörde till det finländska musikskolsystemets ursprungliga ambitioner (Broman-Kananen, 2005, s. 40–41; Heimonen & Hebert, 2012). Elevernas musikaliska utveckling och deras välstånd i konkreta situationer framstod genomgående som mest angelägna teman för deltagarna.

Forskningsfråga 2: Hur beskriver musikinstitutlärarna de lösningar de utvecklar för att möta utmaningar i undervisningspraktiken, särskilt med avseende på målet att skapa förutsättningar för goda musikrelationer?

De utmaningar lärarna beskriver kan organiseras i fyra kategorier: (a) att hantera social press, (b) att hantera press från institutionen, (c) att undvika skada som kan hänga samman med musikpraktiker, (d) att anpassa undervisningen till olika elever och situationer. Läroplansgrundernas mål att skapa förutsättningar för goda musikrelationer kräver ett kontinuerligt tolkningsarbete. Exempel på lösningar som lärarna beskriver inkluderar

- att avvärja stereotypa beskrivningar av musicerande ("det är bara flickor som spelar violin") och hantera förakt som kan uppstå både inom och utanför musikpraktiker ("det behövs väl ingen särskild kunskap för att sjunga")
- att identifiera och undvika orimliga krav (till exempel att eleverna ska avstå från viktiga delar av sitt barndomsliv för musikstudiernas skull)
- att skapa psykologiskt trygga och musikaliskt inspirerande kontexter för lärande.

Utmaningar som kommer utifrån beskrivs ibland som svårgripbara, en sorts skuggkrav som lärarna påverkas av även om de inte accepterar idéerna. Gemensamt för dessa krav är att personliga, emotionella och kroppsliga aspekter av lärande i musik inte beaktas. Systematiskt övande är det viktiga och musicerandets mänskliga och relationella dimensioner förpassas till bakgrunden. När lärarna aktivt trotsar dessa oskrivna och outtalade regler, sker det ofta med en känsla av att göra något förbjudet. En närmare analys visar dock att de "vansinniga" (Lärare 1, Lärare 4) saker lärarna gör har omedelbara kopplingar till vad som har betraktats som viktigt i många musikaliska och pedagogiska traditioner: anknytning till sociala och historiska sammanhang, meningsfulla personliga relationer, omsorg om såväl utövare som musikpraktiken i sig, inlevelseförmåga, entusiasm och medvetenhet om långsiktiga mål. Lärarna verkar hämta kraft att stå emot skuggkrav och följa sina egna övertygelser dels ur sin egen strävan efter vitalitet och inspiration, dels ur personlig erfarenhet av att ha fått avgörande stöd och hjälp av egna lärare som har visat sig värda att lita på.

Begreppet "god musikrelation" nämns inte särskilt ofta under samtalen, men lärarnas strävanden visar på en djup samstämmighet med Kurkelas (1997) mest centrala idé: att "musikaliska framsteg" ska definieras som den process genom vilken musiken får en allt bättre förmåga att bidra med något gott i personens liv. På så sätt kan goda musikpraktiker bli (med)konstituerande för det goda livet och samtidigt representera eller peka på variationer av goda liv.

Forskningsfråga 3: Vilka aspekter av kollaborativ reflektion och lärarforskning kan musikinstitutlärare eventuellt uppfatta som värdefulla för arbetet med att utveckla undervisningspraktiker?

Möjligheten att diskutera och utveckla sin undervisningspraktik tillsammans med kolleger i en tillitsfull atmosfär uppskattades av alla deltagare: ”I vardagen hinner vi aldrig prata om det viktigaste, pedagogiken” (Lärare 1, Lärare 2, Lärare 3). Särskilt nämndes fördelarna med att tillfälligt arbeta i ett ”annat forum” än det dagliga kollegiet, där rutiner och förutbestämda roller kan göra det svårare att skapa förändring. Lärarforskningen som utfördes under projektet balanserade stundvis på gränsen till det alltför betungande, men presentationer och diskussion av resultat upplevdes som intressanta och givande såväl individuellt som av hela gruppen. För att peka på studiens bidrag till praktikutveckling har jag använt en omformulering av den tredje forskningsfrågan:

I vilka situationer kan musikinstitutlärare ha behållning av kollaborativ och/eller tvärvetenskaplig praktikutveckling?

Situationer där musikinstitutlärare vill pröva ut nya sätt att undervisa kan under en övergångsperiod skapa sårbarhet hos läraren, som riskerar att utsättas för kritik och ifrågasättande från kolleger och elever. Välvillig och ärlig reflektion och respons i en trygg grupp med ”kritiska vänner” samt möjlighet att hämta stöd i forskning kan underlätta för lärarna att förändra sina arbetssätt och acceptera att lyssna på elevernas åsikter.

En utmaning som har lyfts fram i flera tidigare studier om musikinstitutlärarens arbete (se t ex Kurkela & Tawaststjerna, 1999) är att läraren ofta blir en viktig och långvarigt närvarande person i elevernas liv, ibland en av de få vuxna som barnen upplever att de kan anförtro sig åt. Flera deltagare i studien nämnde att de möter situationer som de egentligen inte är utbildade för att hantera, och att de skulle uppskatta arbetshandledning och samarbete till exempel med psykologer eller fysioterapeuter. Specifik kunskap som skulle vara värdefull för undervisningsarbete kan också saknas; exempelvis nämnde en lärare att hon var helt okunnig i HBTQ-frågor. Påfallande många elever avbryter sina studier vid musikinstitut (Heino & Ojala, 2006; Tuovila, 2003); även i sådana situationer kunde kollaborativ och tvärvetenskaplig analys av bakgrundsorsaker vara till hjälp för att förstå och förebygga avhopp.

Som tidigare nämnts verkar musikinstitut inte alltid kunna härbärgera meningsfulla musikpraktiker och traditioner. Kollaborativt arbete kan hjälpa lärarna att hitta lösningar som utvidgar deras möjligheter att organisera undervisning utanför de rutiner som institutionen kan erbjuda. Samtidigt kan detta arbete stöda musikpraktiker ute i samhället.

Att sträva efter inspiration som håller genom hela skolåret och under en hel lärarkarriär är utmanande. Det gemensamma arbetet under projektet beskrevs också i detta avseende i positiva ordalag, till exempel som ett sätt att ”ladda

batterierna” (Lärare 2), att få ta del av andras utvecklingsarbete och idéer, och att inte ”bli deprimerad” (Lärare 5) trots insikter om att den egna undervisningspraktiken var i behov av förändring.

Tolkande musikmetaforer: mixa, väva samman, balansera

Som musikaliska metaforer för musikinstitutlärares praktikutveckling har jag valt verb som hänvisar till musikskapande och musikutövande: att mixa och att väva samman. Genom sådana processer arbetar musiker med att kombinera, kontrastera, balansera och framhäva olika element i en musikalisk helhet. Ett likande arbete sker när musikinstitutlärare skapar lärandesituationer, väljer repertoar och arbetsmetoder, tänker på de viktiga relationer som omger elevens musicerande, och jämför det klingande resultatet av undervisning och lärande med sin egen musikaliska minnesbank. Deltagarna i studien visar stor uppfinningsrikedom när det gäller att föra samman personer, element och erfarenheter. Balanserandet handlar också om att välja och välja bort gamla och nya normer som ligger djupt i musikpraktiker och traditioner. Varje ”tråd” i väven granskas med avseende på helheten. Psykologiskt innefattar arbetet också att väva samman de symboliska samtal som refererats till tidigare. Lärarna skapar möjligheter för sina elever att uppleva sig själva som deltagare i en kulturell mix av röster; ett exempel är tonåringen som tillbringar en del av sin fredagskväll i en kyrkoorkester bestående av medlemmar i alla åldrar, var och en med sin egen bakgrund och sina egna varianter av ett levande och aktivt musikintresse.

Lärarnas medvetenhet om vad Green (1988) hänvisar till som vävar av ”representerande” betydelser (min översättning, i original: *webs of delineated meanings*) visar på att deras arbete visserligen har en omedelbar innehållslig dimension (själva musiken) men att det också är oupplösligt förbundet med referenser, konnotationer och betydelser som växer fram i en social och relationell kontext. ”Väven” eller ”mixen” kan uttryckas som *det personen kommer att förknippa med musik som resultat av att ha varit elev i ett musikinstitut*. När lärarna lyckas med att skapa förutsättningar för ett gott förhållande till musik, sker det ofta genom att de även skapar förutsättningar för att eleven ska kunna blomstra som människa. De rätta förutsättningarna kan vara hälsa, vänskap, delaktighet i en välvillig grupp, skapande frihet, eller personliga egenskaper som uthållighet, nyfikenhet och humor. Vad lärarna verkar göra är att (direkt eller indirekt) peka på sådant som de uppfattar som värdefullt och stödande både för musikalisk aktivitet och för livet i stort.

Studien antyder alltså att musikinstitutlärare kan bidra positivt till sina elevers liv på villkor att undervisning och lärande präglas av dialog, öppenhet och känslighet (jfr Huhtinen-Hildén, 2012). Inspiration och vitalitet är inte givna en gång för alla och kan inte upprätthållas genom rutiner, utan kräver omsorg, uppmärksamhet, fantasi och improvisationsförmåga. Detta illustreras när Lärare 3 talar om den dagliga praktiken: ”Lektionerna är varje gång en sån där nyfödd

sak. Förstås finns det principer, men varje gång kommer det överraskningar som jag inte hade kunna tänka ut.”

Diskussion

Musikskolor runt om i Europa verkar vara på väg mot större mångfald och öppenhet för olika musikpraktiker och elever. Det kan därför komma att bli allt viktigare att arbeta utgående från en god förståelse av vad som eftersträvas i olika praktiker och hur olika musikformer kan representera olika föreställningar om det goda livet. Naqvi (2012) har visat att själva den begreppsapparatur som används för att beskriva musik och musicerande varierar mellan traditioner. Det är alltså riskabelt att försöka förstå vad en musikpraktik betraktar som viktigt med hjälp av begrepp från en annan praktik eller tradition.

Det finländska musikskolsystemet inrättades bland annat för att skapa enhetlighet, men redan den här studien som fokuserar på fem lärares praktikutveckling visar att diversitet, flexibilitet och lokala skillnader hör till undervisningsvardagen. Socialt och kulturellt meningsfulla musikpraktiker har levt vidare så gott det har varit möjligt inom institutionens ramar. Kanske var enhetligheten varken möjlig eller önskvärd att genomföra fullt ut ens från början. ”Öppna, flexibla strukturer” och ”varierande, pluralistisk musikpedagogik” har också officiellt rekommenderats av Finlands musikläroinrättningars förbund under åtminstone det senaste årtiondet (Klemettinen, 2006). Frågan om musikinstitutpedagogik kunde få drag av socialt etablerad, kollektiv ”praktik” i MacIntyres bemärkelse hänger på lärarnas benägenhet till gemensam reflektion och utveckling.¹⁶⁶ Enligt deltagarna i den här studien är tendensen vid musikinstitutionen snarare den motsatta: undervisningen blir i hög grad ett individuellt projekt som i första hand är knutet till varje specifik musikpraktik, trots att lärarna själva efterlyser utökad samarbete (jfr Broman-Kananen, 2005).

En tänkbar väg mot gemensamma mål ges genom det angelägna intresse för elevernas välmående och blomstring som delas av lärarna i den här studien oberoende av de praktiks specifika kunskaper, färdigheter och personliga egenskaper som eftersträvas i övrigt. Dygdteori efter MacIntyre erbjuder ett möjligt sätt att närma sig ”godhetens former” i relation till musik. I sin analys av *eudaimonia* föreslår Annas (2011) att begreppet ”lycka” kan få en medlande roll mellan generella livsmål och det specifika svar som varje person ger på frågan om vad lycka innebär i hans eller hennes livsomständigheter (s. 125). Jag föreslår att uttrycket ”en god musikrelation” kunde uppfattas som ett liknande medierande begrepp. Lärarna i den här studien hänvisar ofta till *inspiration* som

¹⁶⁶ MacIntyres praktikbegrepp användes för studien på grund av kopplingen till Alpersons tidiga texter om praxialism (1987/1994, 1990). Konsekvenserna av detta val blev bland annat att fästa särskild uppmärksamhet vid de personliga egenskaper som eftersträvas inom olika musikpraktiker. Att i stället utgå från praktikteorier formulerade av Bourdieu, som Burnard (2012) har gjort i sin studie av musikkreativitetens mångfald, eller Wenger, som Partti (2012) gjorde i sin undersökning av kosmopolitiska digitala musiker, kunde ha öppnat andra intressanta perspektiv.

ett centralt mål för sin verksamhet. Även detta begrepp kunde tjäna i en medierande roll.¹⁶⁷

Kurkelas begrepp ”musikrelation” (*musiikkisuhte*) har paralleller med mänskliga relationer. Att förstå idén genom denna analogi gör det möjligt att ställa frågor om vad som är närvarande i relationen. Präglas atmosfären av rädsla, tvång, manipulation, orimliga kompromisser och glädjelöshet? Eller är relationen, som Winnicott (1953) uttrycker det, ”tillräckligt bra” – inte befriad från oundviklig frustration, men till största delen något som skapar mening och glädje? För att hänvisa till den heuristiska kartan: stämmer det i det enskilda fallet att musikinstitutstudierna ger tillgång till musikaliska upplevelser och aktiviteter, skapar förutsättningar för ett mera givande liv, främjar individuell utveckling och de relationer på mikro- och makronivå som stöder eleven, och att musiken visar på centrala och/eller existentiella dimensioner i människans liv? Och för att anknyta till resultaten av den här studien: stämmer det att musikinstitutstudierna är inspirerande och öppnar nya möjligheter?

Frågor av det här slaget kan utgöra bakgrund till samtal om hur musikpedagogikpraktiker kan utvecklas. Higgins (2011) föreslår att pedagogik (*education*) i sig kunde definieras som ”ett pågående samtal i det utrymme som skapas av frågan om vad som bäst stöder mänsklig blomstring” (s. 258, min översättning). Olika varianter av fostran till blomstring verkar ofta finnas inbyggda i musikpraktiker. Man kunde alltså argumentera för att utifrån kommande så kallade instrumentella mål för musikundervisningen är onödiga eller rentav kontraproduktiva i det fall de inte passar ihop med musikpraktiken i sig. Däremot blir det betydelsefullt att öppet diskutera vad som eftersträvas i praktiker. Elever behöver höras och uppleva att de möter förståelse i det här samtalet medan de är mitt inne i processen att både ”göra musiken till sin egen” (musikinstitutrektor i projektet) och att ”göra egen musik” (Lärare 4). Samtidigt för samtalet praktiker vidare och skapar utvidgade förståelser för vad det är i musik och musikpedagogik som musikälskare uppskattar och som kan bidra till det goda livet. Alltför opersonliga ramfaktorteorier riskerar att missa de relationella, intergenerationella, emotionella och kroppsliga dimensioner som historiskt sett har varit en oupplöslig del av sociala och kulturella musikpraktiker. Musikinstitut kan svårligen ignorera ”hela spektret av sociala, kulturella, mänskliga och etiska målsättningar” (Alperson, 2014b, s. 30, min översättning) som ingår i musikpedagogik.

Genom hela studien har jag också lagt märke till hur många vedertagna pedagogiska begrepp framstår som opersonliga och inadekvata i en musikpedagogisk kontext. Det är naturligtvis inte felaktigt att tala om

¹⁶⁷ Begreppet *inspiration* används på ett brokigt sätt i humanvetenskaperna (för en litteraturöversikt ur psykologin, se Thrash & Elliot, 2003) och är vanskligt både att definiera och att operationalisera. Tolkat både som personlighetsdrag och som tillstånd är begreppet *inspiration* underbeforskat, särskilt ur tvärvetenskaplig synpunkt (Oleynick et al, 2014, s. 1).

”motivation” och ”goda lärandemiljöer”, men lärarnas egna ord är ”inspiration” och ”liv”. Den konceptuella klarhet som behövs för att förstå musikskolors praktikutveckling hänger alltså knappast på allt mer abstrakta formuleringar. Snarare kunde den förankras i de ”livsnära”, humoristiska, till och med poetiska ord och uttryck som stämmer ihop med och karakteriserar musikpraktiker och traditioner.

Studiens metod och begränsningar

Den *tolkande praktikanalys* som utvecklats i avhandlingen är, så vitt jag vet, det första försöket att systematiskt studera musikpedagogisk praktik med stöd av en metod som uttryckligen är inspirerad av ”robust praxialism”, en filosofisk teori för musikpedagogik presenterad av Alperson (1991, 2010b). I efterhand noterar jag att metoden har likheter med etnomusikologiskt arbete, vilket kanske inte är alldeles förvånande. Alpersons texter innehåller ett stort antal praktiska exempel som kan anses gränsa till empirisk forskning. Han antyder också att ett radikalt fokus på vad utövande praktiker har att säga om sitt arbete kunde föra tankelinjen närmare antropologi än filosofi. Studiens analys av det ”goda” i musikrelationer och musikpedagogik berättigar dock enligt min mening den filosofiska dimensionen i arbetet. Det verkar även finnas intressanta likheter mellan Alpersons praxialism och J. Elliotts *praxiology*, där fokus läggs på hur pedagogiska mål uttrycks i undervisningspraktiker (se J. Elliott, 2007, s. 3).

Reflekterande samtal som de förekommer i nordiskt socialt arbete (Andersen, 1991; Anderson & Jensen, 2007) har vad jag vet inte heller tidigare inkluderats i musikpedagogisk forskning. Samtalen genererade mycket rika data men konsekvensen blev också att det krävdes särskild eftertanke inför materialurval och analysarbete. Den största fördelen med formatet var att det gav möjlighet för noggrant iterativt arbete där deltagarna var med om att formulera relevanta frågor och tolkningar kunde växa fram försiktigt och steg för steg i nära samarbete mellan deltagare och forskare.

Studiens begränsningar ligger i att rapporten till stor del bygger på lärarnas egna utsagor om sin undervisningspraktik, att deltagarna själva anmälde sig till projektet och därför kan anses representera enbart den grupp musikinstitutlärare som är intresserade av att aktivt utveckla sin undervisning, och att samtliga deltagare i likhet med forskaren är högt utbildade och har vit, europeisk medelklassbakgrund. Forskare med annan expertis än min hade troligen i samtal och analys fäst större uppmärksamhet vid de frågor som engagerat dem mest. Möjligheter till vidareutveckling av liknande forskning skulle alltså kunna vara att komplettera samtalen med klassrumsobservationer och att involvera ett större antal deltagare med varierande bakgrund, liksom forskare från andra specialområden. Komparativa studier skulle också vara av stort intresse, inte minst genom möjligheten att pröva analysmetoden i andra sammanhang.

För att kunna svara på de frågor som ställdes i den aktuella studien var förfarandet dock tillräckligt. Samtliga evalueringskriterier för tolkande forskning

som genom metaanalys av kriterielitteratur har utarbetats av Schwartz-Shea (2014) har beaktats: (1) trovärdighet (att personer som berörs av forskningen kan lita på studiens analyser och insikter), (2) tillräcklig detaljrikedom (*thick description*; Geertz, 1973), (3) reflexivitet, samt (4) triangulering/intertextualitet (att ett tillräckligt antal röster och referenser har tagits med i tolkning och analys).

Slutord om nordisk musikskolpolicy

Nordisk musikskolpolicy bygger på idealet att alla barn och unga ska erbjudas jämlika möjligheter att delta i frivillig musikundervisning av hög kvalitet. En insikt från den här studien är att för att förverkliga idealet behövs medvetenhet och kontinuerliga samtal om den variation av bidrag till det goda livet som olika musikpraktiker anses ge. Avhandlingen presenterar exempel på ”goda musikrelationer”, hur de kan växa fram, och hur de kan kopplas till traditioner och forskning som har att göra med både musikpraktiker och mänsklig blomstring. Jag vill argumentera för att djup och bred förståelse för vad som anses kunna konstituera eller skada ”det goda” i musikpedagogik med fördel kan skapas genom studier där musikpraktiker är i fokus och där personer med omedelbar erfarenhet av praktikerna involveras, snarare än genom ”utifrånperspektiv” som bygger på ideologiska (inklusive ”praxialistiska”) övertygelser. Att försöka förstå den väldiga variationen i musik och musikpedagogik är en uppgift som öppnar möjligheter för ständigt förnyade, djupgående, kritiska och respektfulla frågor. Min förhoppning är att studiens metoder och insikter kan bidra till att stöda inte bara andra forskare utan också lärare, elever, familjer, administratörer och beslutsfattare i att ställa kloka frågor om vad som är viktigt i musikskolpedagogik, hur utveckling kan ske, och hur musikskolpraktiker kan bli så konstruktiva och inspirerande som möjligt.

Förslag till fortsatt forskning

Studien visar att när musikskollärares ambition är att inspirera sina elever kan detta skapa påtaglig och rik komplexitet i deras arbete. Flera av lärarna i studien nämnde att de har goda idéer och material från projekt som kunde delas med andra, men att de saknar tid att analysera eller publicera rapporter från sina aktiviteter. Om sådana hinder för kollektiv praktikutveckling är vanliga bland musikskollärare mera generellt, såväl i Finland som i andra länder, visar det på ett stort fält med ännu obrukad potential för forskning och utveckling.

Vidare studier om musikskolor kunde med fördel ha tvärvetenskaplig profil. Musikinstitutlärarnas formuleringar om att känna sig starkt levande visar intressanta likheter med psykologiska studier där musikalisk aktivitet har betraktats som ett sätt att kommunicera vitalitet och intresse för livet (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Stern, 2010). Fenomenet inspiration är underbeforskat och det finns många frågor kring vad som händer när en person ”brinner för något” (Oleynick et al, 2014). Att förstå värden som försvaras i musikskolor som indikatorer både på vad som just då uppskattas i samhället och på opposition mot

sådana tendenser öppnar också för sociologiskt arbete som antyds i den här studien, men ligger utanför vad som hade varit möjligt att analysera i en enda avhandling.

Inom musikpedagogisk filosofi har flera författare (nyligen t ex Bowman, 2012b; D. J. Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Regelski, 2012) argumenterat för att det aristoteliska dygdbegreppet fronesis, som sammanknippas med klokhet i praxis, har goda tillämpningsmöjligheter i musikundervisning. Jag vill tillägga att arbetet kunde utvidgas till att omfatta andra delar av samtida dygdteori (t ex Annas, 2011). Hur kunde musikpedagoger till exempel tolka de tre övriga antika kardinaldygderna: rättvisa, mod (uthållighet) och måttlighet?

Några frågor som kunde vara värda att studera närmare är varför musikskollärare inte verkar diskutera pedagogik med varandra i större utsträckning; hur man kunde tolka och förstå de ”skuggkrav” som lärarna ibland verkar påverkas av trots sina djupaste övertygelser; och hur det kommer sig att lärarna ibland får arbeta hårt för att upprätthålla vitalitet och inspiration.

Slutligen noterar jag att det är osannolikt att forskare, pedagoger och musikutövare någonsin kommer att sakna frågor att ställa om musikens ontologi eller om musikens betydelse i människans liv. Vår förståelse av vad som kan vara gott i relationen mellan människor och musik har visserligen förbättrats och fördjupats genom studier inom en rad olika områden, däribland pedagogik, men insikter och praktiker genomgår kontinuerliga, organiska förändringar. På så sätt kan forskning på musikpedagogikens område i bästa fall komma att påminna om musikens eget levande, mångskiftande och fascinerande väsen.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation letter

Inbjudan att delta i forskningsprojekt

Bästa musikpedagog!

Är Du intresserad av att vara med och forma morgondagens institutpedagogik på basen av Dina egna erfarenheter? Vill Du utveckla Dina pedagogiska kunskaper?

Under vårterminen 20XX ordnar Åbo Akademi ett pilotprojekt med syftet att fördjupa förståelsen för musikinstitutpedagogers professionella vardag. Målsättningen är att reflektera kring följande frågor:

1. I läroplansgrunderna betonas att undervisningen ska skapa ett *gott förhållande till musiken och ett självständigt och livslångt musikintresse* med utgångspunkt i *elevernas personliga målsättningar*. Hur kan dessa mål förverkligas i praktiken?
2. Vilka dilemman möter lärarna i undervisningen och vilka lösningsmodeller verkar fungera bäst? Vad uppfattar lärarna själva som god yrkespraxis?
3. Hur kan musikpedagogisk forskning stöda lärarna i deras arbete, och hur kan man på bästa sätt ta tillvara lärarnas egna erfarenheter så att det skapas dialog och balans mellan teori och praktik?

Projektet anordnas i form av en kostnadsfri fortbildning för fyra lärare. Kursen hålls på arbetstid och omfattar fyra dagar, en per månad med start i februari 20XX. Innehållet omfattar bland annat

- information och diskussion kring ny musikpedagogisk forskning
- utbildning i reflekterande praktik
- diskussion om relationen till elever och föräldrar
- perspektiv på pedagogisk psykologi, generationsskillnader, och nya fenomen i yrkesvardagen

Varje deltagare intervjuas individuellt och får under kursen möjlighet att ventilera frågor och tankar som gäller den egna undervisningen.

Intervjumaterial och andra data behandlas konfidentiellt och deltagarna får själva bestämma vilken nivå av anonymitet de önskar. Resultatet av forskningsprojektet presenteras i en akademisk avhandling och används också som grund för kommande fortbildningar.

Projektansvariga är Cecilia Björk, musikmagister och doktorand i musikpedagogik, samt Sven-Erik Hansén, professor i pedagogik och projektets handledare.

Vi svarar gärna på frågor och hoppas på ett givande projekt!

För anmälningar och ytterligare information, vänligen kontakta Cecilia Björk per e-post XX

Med tack på förhand för Ditt intresse,

Appendix B

Summary of group sessions

Session 1

Introduction to the project

Presentation round in the group: participants' backgrounds and reasons for enrolling, researcher presenting her own background and reasons for initiating the project

Discussions about music school curricula, the concept 'a good relationship to music', and the ambition to promote lifelong interest in music

Discussions in relation to selected literature (see Appendix D)

Discussion about the concept of phronesis

Introduction to action research, teacher inquiry, and reflecting conversation processes

Preliminary formulation of inquiry by each teacher

Session 2

Researcher

Brief recapitulation of reflecting conversation processes

Teacher 1

Presentation of inquiry. Group reflection. Discussion about interview questions for students

Teacher 5

Presentation of inquiry. Group reflection. Discussion about interview format

Researcher + participants

Discussion about scholarly work related to pupil voice and intergenerational dialogue in education.
Visit in the group by the dissertation advisor

Teacher 3 Presentation of inquiry. Group reflection. Decision to make video recordings and an interview

Teacher 2 Presentation of inquiry. Group reflection. Decision to introduce the subject at a singing teachers' conference. Decision to make video recordings

Teacher 4 Absent

Session 3

Researcher + participants Brief round, news from every inquiry

Researcher Brief recapitulation of reflective conversation processes

Teacher 4 Presentation of inquiry. Group reflection. Discussion about how to evaluate a new way of working

Teacher 3 Video from group rehearsal. Video from group rehearsals. Group reflections

Researcher + participants Discussion about developmental psychology, particularly children around the age of nine

Teacher 2 Discussion about inquiry. Video from individual lesson with student 1

Teacher 5 Presentation of data from email questionnaire. Group reflections

Teacher 1 Presentation of recording from interview with students and music recording with students and teacher. Group reflections

Researcher + participants Practical discussions about sessions, methods, use of blog, and use of recording equipment

Session 4

Researcher + participants Participant-initiated discussion about how to arrange peer group reflection in music schools

Researcher + participants Discussion about how to use video recordings as a tool for developing teaching and learning

<i>Teacher 2</i>	Video from individual lesson with student 2. Group reflections. Discussion about how to support students through difficult periods
<i>Teacher 1</i>	Presentation of radio interview with herself and students (recording from ten years earlier, same students still musically active). Group reflections
<i>Researcher + participants</i>	Discussion about the concept of self-efficacy and about music teachers' professional language
<i>Teacher 5</i>	Presentation of data from email questionnaire. Group reflections
<i>Researcher + participants</i>	Discussion in relation to selected literature
<i>Teacher 4</i>	Presentation of written pupil response (questionnaire). Group reflections
<i>Teacher 3</i>	Reflections on interview made by researcher with the teacher and the director of his music school. Group reflections
<i>Researcher + participants</i>	Discussion about gender issues in music school teaching and learning. Group decision to meet for a final session

Session 5

<i>Researcher + participants</i>	Brief round, news from every inquiry. Participant-initiated discussion about changing practices and the risk-taking involved
<i>Teacher 5</i>	Sharing thoughts about the project. Group reflections on developments in her practice
<i>Teacher 1</i>	Sharing news from her practice. Presentation of interview with students. Group reflections. Discussion about possibilities and challenges of extending inquiry to academic degree. Discussion about how to make room for research in a music school teacher's life

Teacher 3

Presentation of interviews with senior colleagues who have experience related to inquiry. Plans for extending inquiry to academic degree. Group reflections

Teacher 4

Presentation of examples of changing practice and challenging the local curriculum. Reflections on how to develop evaluation of new ideas. Group reflections

Teacher 2

Discussion about how changing practices can influence relations to colleagues. Group reflections

Researcher + participants

Closing, planning for follow-up interviews

Appendix C

Letter to students and parents

Vasa den XX xxxxx 20XX

Bästa elev/förälder!

Under vårterminen 20XX ordnar Åbo Akademi i Vasa ett pilotprojekt med syftet att fördjupa förståelsen för musikinstitutpedagogers professionella vardag. Målsättningen är bland annat att kartlägga god yrkespraxis på fältet och koppla samman den med internationell musikpedagogisk forskning.

NN deltar i projektet och kommer att intervjuas om sin pedagogik. I analyser och diskussioner kommer NN:s elever att förekomma anonymt, ibland som realistiska men fiktiva personer i situationer som illustrerar hur läraren jobbar.

Resultatet av studien sammanställs i en akademisk avhandling på engelska och kommer att användas som grund för kommande fortbildning och utveckling.

Projektansvariga är Cecilia Björk, doktorand i musikpedagogik, samt Sven-Erik Hansén, professor i pedagogik och projektets handledare.

Vi är glada över NN:s medverkan och svarar gärna på frågor i anslutning till projektet!

Med vänlig hälsning,

Cecilia Björk c/o Nina Bäckman, F6

Åbo Akademi, Pedagogiska fakulteten, Strandgatan 2, 65100 Vasa

tel. XX, Skype XX

Appendix D

List of literature discussed during group sessions

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Cecilia Björk

In Search of Good Relationships to Music

Understanding Aspiration and Challenge in Developing Music School Teacher Practices

What is 'good' in and about music education?

This thesis argues that the possible links between music education and human flourishing remain highly relevant for practice and policy. Qualitative accounts of five music school teachers' efforts to develop their practices illuminate the depth and complexity of their work. Together with their students, the teachers engage in processes of constituting and combining various forms of goodness, aiming for musical skill but also for strong experiences of vitality and inspiration.

Attempts to establish normative policies in music education are inevitably complicated by the fact that different musical practices emphasise and embody different ideas of musical goodness as well as of the good life. In the increasingly diverse landscape of Western music education, a more advanced understanding of musical practices and their respective values and instructional traditions is becoming imperative. The study introduces *interpretive practice analysis*, the first systematic empirical method based on a robust praxialist philosophy of music education. It also addresses the nature of multilevel conversations that can expand and refine conceptions of what is considered worthwhile in teaching and learning music.

